MONET ISN'T EVERYTHING, BY JOHN UPDIKE

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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UPSET!

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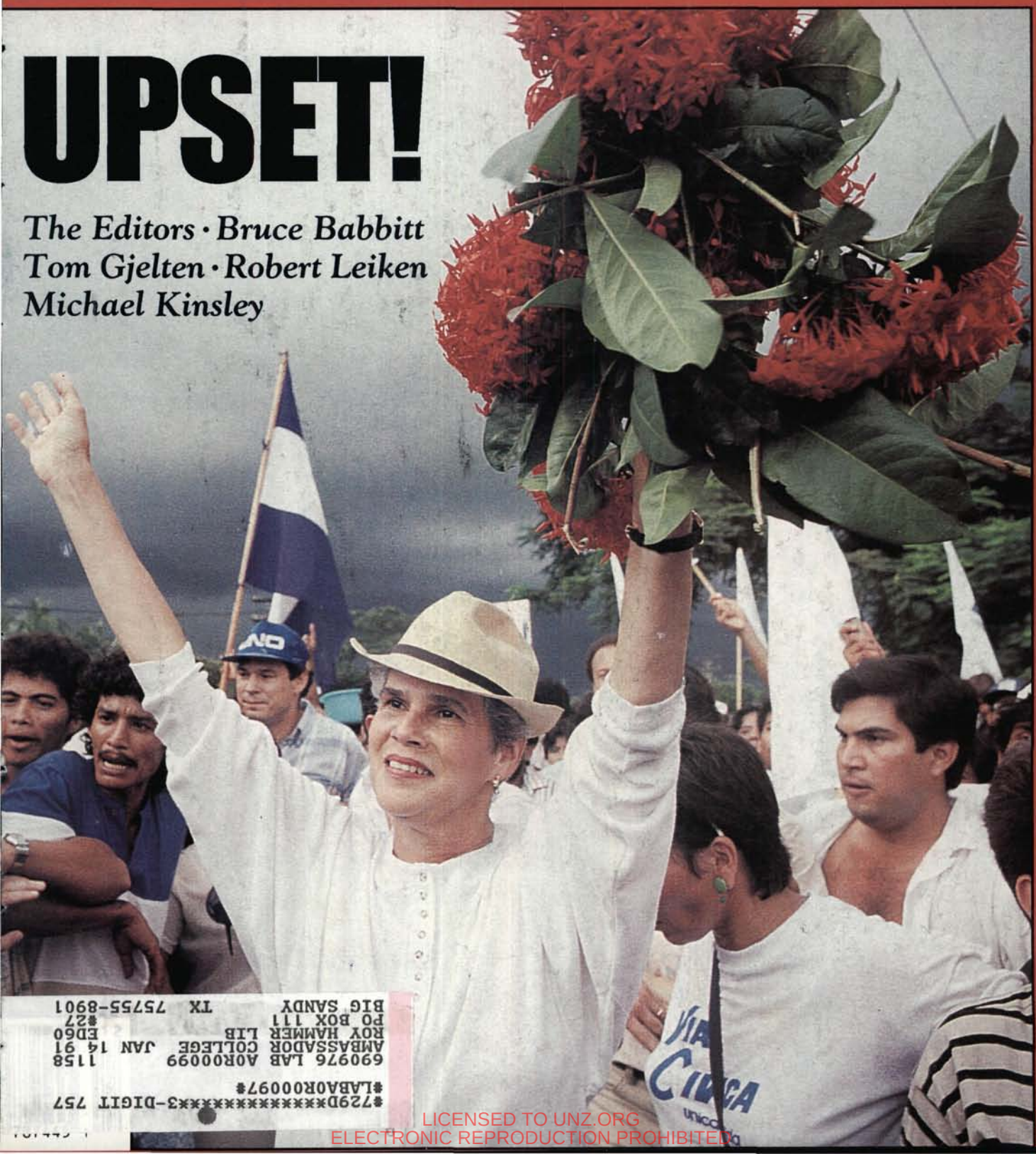

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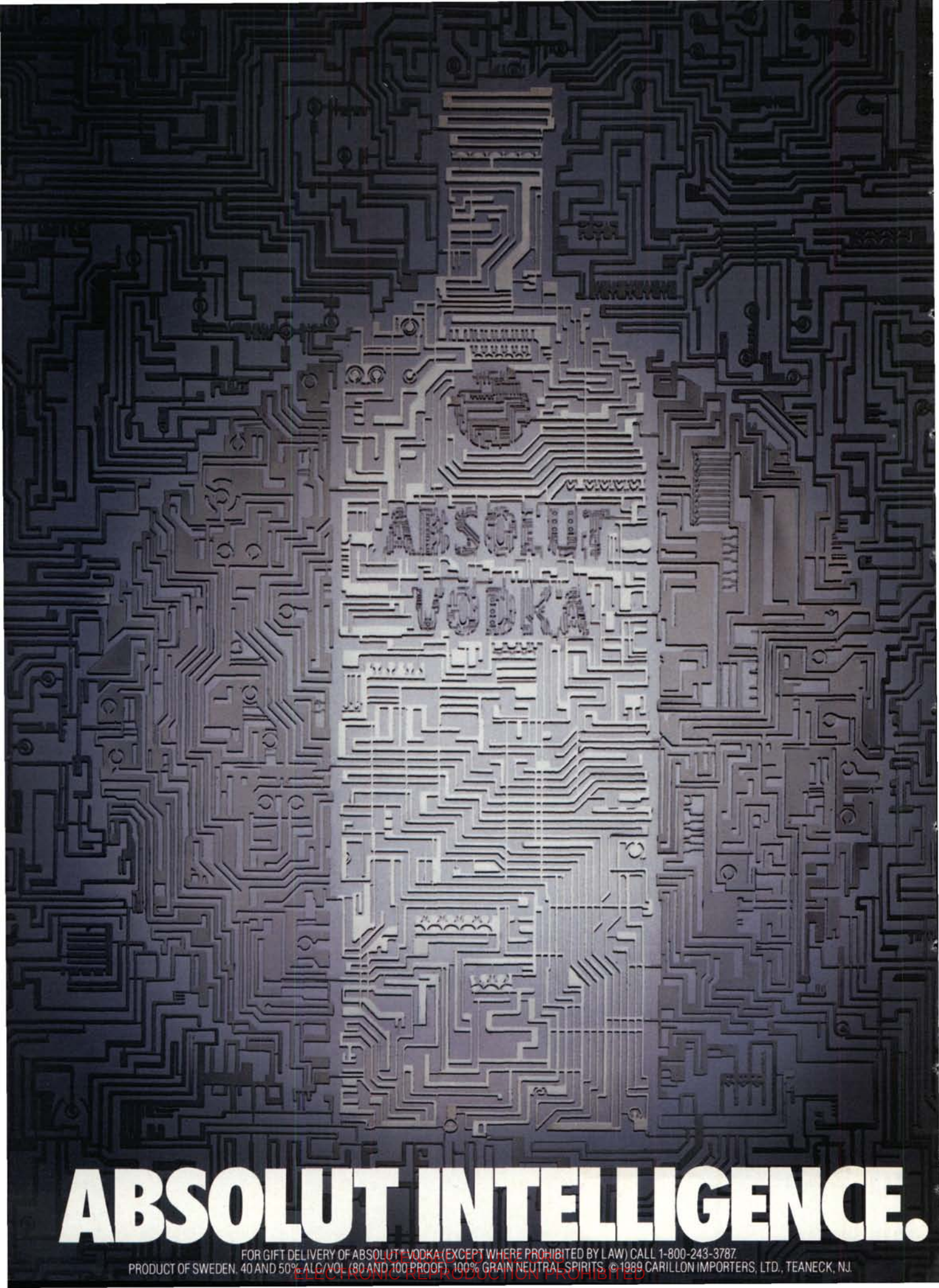

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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MARCH 19, 1990

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Cover: Photograph of Violeta Chamorro by Paolo Bosio (Gamma-Liaison).

4 MICHAEL KINSLEY **TRB: TAKING RESPONSIBILITY** Shouldering the credit for what happened in Nicaragua.

6 CORRESPONDENCE Marxist Darwinism, English run amok, crèche wars, &c.

7 THE EDITORS **WHO WON NICARAGUA?** Violeta Chamorro and two million Nicaraguans, with a little help from their friends. **FLIGHT PLANS** The Soviet Union refuses to let its people go directly to Tel Aviv. **NOTEBOOK** More on the square dudes at *Time*.

11 FRED BARNES **WHITE HOUSE WATCH: RAGING BULLS** John Sununu and Richard Darman, the two snorting beasts who rule the White House with an iron hoof.

12 PIERRE LELLOUCHE **KOHLS APART** Whether it's 'two plus four' or 'four plus zero,' the arithmetic of German reunification is hard to figure.

14 TOM GJELTEN **LET'S MAKE A DEAL** UNO doesn't owe Ortega anything. But unless they negotiate, the Sandinistas may continue to make Nicaragua miserable.

16 ROBERT S. LEIKEN **OOPS** This time the media got it really, really wrong.

17 BRUCE BABBITT **POLL POSITION** Observers didn't actually outnumber voters in Nicaragua, but their massive presence at the election made all the difference.

19 BILL BERKELEY **DOE OUR DEAR** The brutal regime of Liberia's President Samuel K. Doe retains U.S. support despite a serious challenge to its power.

22 MICHAEL WALDMAN **QUID PRO WHOA** The Keating five and Al D'Amato clearly went too far. But what services can legislators legitimately provide for their constituents?

24 WESTON KOSOVA **CRANSTON WIGGLING** If the California senator changes his story about his role in the Lincoln S&L scandal again, he's going to get pretty dizzy.

26 STANLEY KAUFFMANN **ON FILMS: FUTURE TENSE** Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* turns into garish sci-fi; *Lonely Woman Seeks Life Companion*, a surprising Soviet import.

28 JOHN UPDIKE **MONET ISN'T EVERYTHING** Monet's series paintings—of cathedrals, haystacks, water lilies—show him hard at work; sometimes, in fact, too hard at work.

30 TZVETAN TODOROV **MEASURING EVIL** *Modernity and the Holocaust* by Zygmunt Bauman

32 ALAN MICHAEL PARKER **POEM** *Paying*

33 WILFRED MELLERS **FIERY AND COOL** *Berlioz: A Musical Biography of the Creative Genius of the Romantic Era* by D. Kern Holoman

37 HENRY FAIRLIE **IN PRAISE OF DABBLERS** *Whitehall* by Peter Hennessy

43 MARTIN PERETZ **PARIS DIARIST: ETHNICAL DILEMMAS** The darker side of the springtime of nations.

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FROM WASHINGTON

Taking responsibility

Two years ago, after Congress finally cut off all U.S. support for the contra war in Nicaragua, President Reagan declared: "Those who led the fight against our package of assistance to the democratic resistance cannot escape responsibility for what followed." What followed—ceasefire, free election, victory for the opposition, voluntary surrender of political power by the Sandinistas—turned out to be pleasanter than anyone would have dared to predict. And, wouldn't you know, suddenly it turns out that contra opponents were not responsible after all. It was the contras themselves who achieved this splendid result, we are now told. Only yesterday they were (said their supporters) a spent force, thanks to the perfidy of Congress. Now they have undergone a stunning retrospective recovery.

"Let it be on your head" was a major theme of contra supporters during the years of bitter ideological struggle here in Washington. "Which side are you on?" challenged White House communications director Patrick Buchanan in a notorious 1986 *Washington Post* op-ed piece. "Whether Central America [becomes] the next appendage of Soviet Empire is a question to which the Democratic Party in Congress now holds the answer." Failure to fund the contras "would lead, as night follows day, to loss of Central America." And, "If Central America goes the way of Nicaragua, *they will be in San Diego.*"

THE NEW REPUBLIC: "If in Nicaragua transition to democracy were possible without war, we too would oppose any fighting. But that option does not exist. Does anyone believe that the Sandinistas will ever . . . permit a free allocation of power by election?" War is brutal, but: "The liquidation of the democratic side of the Nicaraguan civil war will bring infinitely more tragedy to Nicaragua, to Central America, and ultimately to the rest of the hemisphere."

The pro-contra argument was that without continuous active military resistance—war, in other words—the Sandinistas were certain to consolidate their power. Anyone who thought otherwise—who held out hope for regional negotiations, for moral suasion, for internal discontent, for the natural economic catastrophe of a Marxist economy—was either hopelessly naive or a secret Communist sympathizer.

Now, Congress did briefly approve military aid to the contras in 1986, and "humanitarian" aid at other times. And the Reagan administration snuck in some illegal military assistance before that. The contra war managed to kill more than 30,000 Nicaraguans over the years. In proportion to Nicaragua's tiny population, that's the equivalent of almost 3 million Americans. Those who wish to give the contras credit for the triumph of democracy in Nicaragua are reduced to arguing that our on-again, off-again support for the rebels—the zigs and zags for which they had nothing but contempt at the time—was, in retrospect, exactly the right approach. By a remarkable coincidence, 30,000 deaths was precisely the right number: more would have been otiose, but fewer would have been insufficient.

Actually, there could be a grain of truth in this. What may have helped, if anything, is a sort of bad-cop, good-cop strategy, with the White House threatening war and Congress offering negotiations. But how many more Nicaraguans would have died—died unnecessarily, as it turns out—if contra supporters had had their way all along? And where would Nicaragua be today? Probably in the midst of a bloody civil war, with the Sandinistas still in charge. At best, there would be a militarily installed junta more to U.S. liking, with no electoral legitimacy and the ousted Sandinistas fighting their own renewed guerrilla war from the hills. Surely it is more wholesome to speculate whether today's happier result might have been achieved with only 20,000 war deaths, or 10,000, or even none at all.

To be honest, I didn't predict this outcome, either. In fact, I even wrote an article a couple of years ago titled "Who Lost Nicaragua?" Succumbing to the romantic realpolitik of Washington in the 1980s, when hard noses were de rigueur, I accepted the premise that cutting off the contras would probably mean permanent Sandinista rule and argued that contra aid was a bad idea anyway. That was unduly pessimistic. But at least I was prepared to accept responsibility for the probable consequences of my position, unlike most contra supporters, who never acknowledged the cost in blood and destruction they were willing to impose. Ronald Reagan apparently spent his entire administration believing that the

continued on page 42

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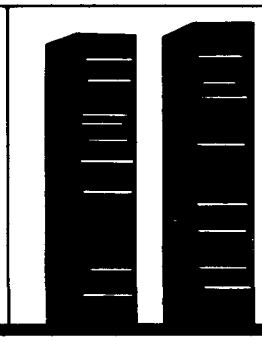

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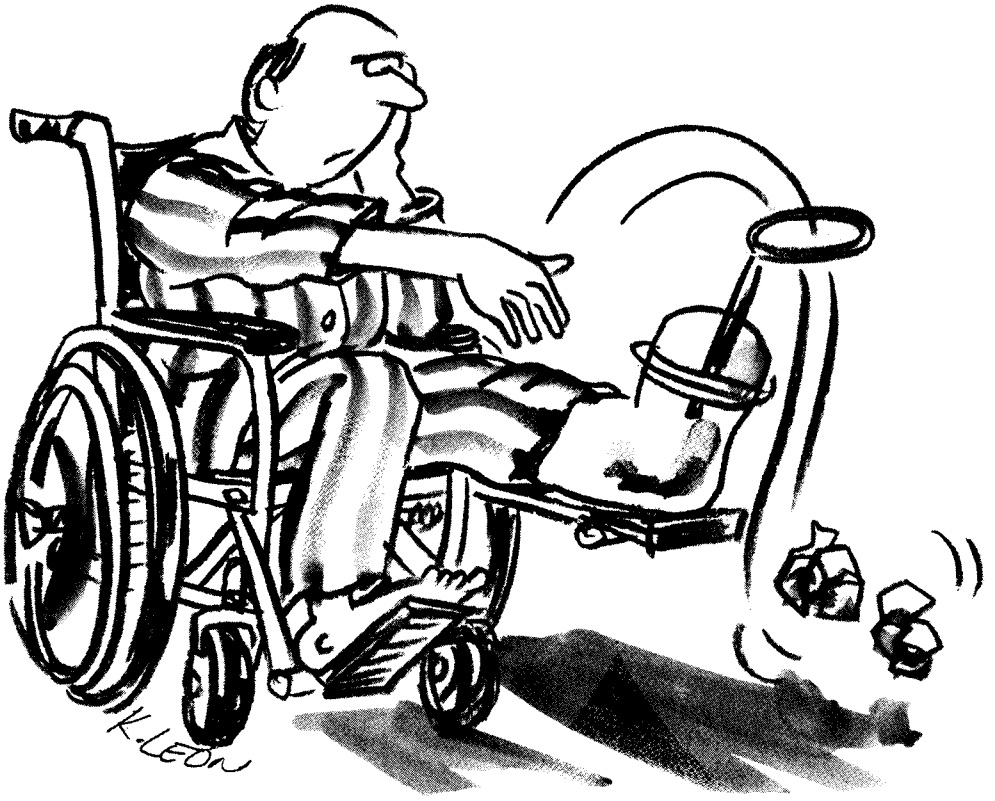

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CORRESPONDENCE

Origin of speciousness

To the editors:
Robert Wright misses a fleet of boats in his review of Stephen Jay Gould's *Wonderful Life* ("The Intelligence Test," January 29). Evolutionary biology covers a number of disciplines and schools. Richard Dawkins and E. O. Wilson, the only other evolutionists mentioned by name in the review, have labored to show that the complex behavior of mammals and social insects can be explained by the substitution of one form of a gene for another. Others, such as Gould, search for the forces that constrain or turn the course of evolution. Someday these approaches may fuse. Right now they don't, and each research program can manage fairly well while ignoring the other. Gould has not perverted the monolithic evolutionary faith—he has merely advanced his side.

Gould has never hidden his assumptions, prejudices, or hopes. Scientists are not assigned their problems by nature, and he has chosen his according to his tastes. Wright twists Gould's candor into a hidden agenda to promulgate Marxism. The theory of punctuated equilibrium may be compatible with armchair Marxism (what isn't?), but it is worth remembering that Niles Eldredge, who is senior author to Gould on the paper that proposed punctuationism, isn't a Marxist, and neither are the many evolutionists who accept the theory because it more or less works for the problems they are studying.

Wright accuses Gould of misusing Darwin, based on a tertiary source. Gould is a very reputable historian of science; Wright gets the title of Darwin's book wrong. In scores of places in print, and hundreds of places in his manuscript notes, Darwin proposed gradual, usually insensible change. Wright quotes one sentence from Darwin that foreshadowed punctuated equilibrium. It appeared in the fourth edition (1866) of *The Origin of Species* (no *the* in the middle), where it answered a case that Darwin admitted ran counter to his belief in gradual change. Darwin's friend Hugh Falconer had found that fossil elephants changed, but the changes were neither gradual nor progressive, nor always in the right temporal order. Darwin had been troubled by the case since the 1840s, but Falconer delayed publication till 1863. To conclude on the basis of this single qualification that Darwin was therefore a punctuationist is equivalent to concluding that Isaiah was a Christian.

STAN RACHOOTIN
South Hadley, Massachusetts

To the editors:
Robert Wright's argument that the "progressivism" Gould attacks in his work is already without standing among scholars, suggesting therefore that Gould fences only with straw men, is at best off-target. After all, as Wright says over and over again, Gould is writing for popular audiences in his books and *Natural History* articles, not for scholars; and by no means has "progressivism" lost its hold on popular consciousness in this country with respect to human history, Western history, or U.S. history.

COLIN GREER
New York, New York

Killer jargon

To the editors:
Toward the end of Alex Heard's report on his adventures at the convention of the Modern Language Association ("Jargonaut," January 29), he mentions stopping by "a fine, self-lashing session called 'The Way We Write: Critical Style As a Professional Issue.' " As moderator of the session, I am pleased Heard found it worthwhile, particularly since the panelists forthrightly addressed the question of "killer jargon."

Heard reports the session to have been "sparsely attended." I confess I was delighted when more than 400 MLA members chose to listen to some clear, self-critical remarks about academic writing; the average convention session draws an audience of from 50 to 100.

DAVID LAURENCE
New York, New York

To the editors:
Alex Heard found an amusing new angle on what is, after all, not much more than a "string-cite" of arcane workshop titles. He missed, however, the true value of the MLA meeting: since it is held every year during mid-winter, it keeps journalists away from the annual meeting of the Association of American Law Schools.

STEVEN LUBET
Chicago, Illinois

Crèche course

To the editors:
In "Menorah Wars" (February 5), Michael McGough quotes Justice Kennedy as dissenting from a Supreme Court decision banning a Nativity scene from government premises; Kennedy asked if "those religions enjoying the largest following must be consigned to the status of least-favored faiths so as to avoid any possible risk of offending members of minority religions."

Justice Kennedy does not really have to worry. In some areas of the law dealing with displays of religion less public than Nativity scenes on public property, the Supreme Court sees to it that the needs of members of minority religions can be ignored by the majority. In the workplace, for example, the federal equal employment opportunity laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion as well as race, sex, and national origin. When the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission tried to define nondiscrimination as requiring employers to make some reasonable accommodation to the needs of religious minorities (allowing observant Jews and Seventh-day Adventists to avoid working on their religious holidays, for example), the Court rejected the regulation as lacking a statutory basis (*Dewey* v. *Reynolds Metals Co.*, 1971). When Congress passed a law in 1972 requiring reasonable accommodation of religious practices, the Court responded by defining "reasonable accommodation" ever more narrowly (in *Hardison* v. *Trans World Airlines*, 1977, and *Ansonia Board of Education* v. *Philbrook*, 1986), so that by now there is very little employers have to do to take into account the fact that this is a religiously diverse society.

PAUL BURSTEIN
Seattle, Washington

To the editors:
An amusing, if tangential, footnote to "Menorah Wars" concerns the ultimate fate of the crèche display at the center of the 1984 *Lynch* v. *Donnelly* court battle. The city fathers of Pawtucket, Rhode Island, ostensibly fearful of the possibility of vandalism, chose to erect this past year's Nativity scene in the monkey house of the municipal park zoo. The stench and screeching of the primates, although not of the ox and lamb variety, did lend the display a certain authentic, if not quite reverent, flavor.

These things really are best left to private sponsors.

WILLIAM J. MURPHY
Providence, Rhode Island

Yen for accuracy (cont'd.)

To the editors:
John B. Judis's "The Japanese Megaphone" (January 22) implies that the Electronic Industries Association is a front for the Japanese. As chairman of the association and president of an American company, I can tell you that this is flat-out wrong. Established in

continued on page 42

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

MARCH 19, 1990

WHO WON NICARAGUA?

Why, the Nicaraguans, of course. They weren't persuaded by the lavish $15 million campaign extravaganza through which Daniel Ortega tried to remold himself into a populist combination of Santa and Springsteen. They weren't scared by the dark side of the Sandinista campaign, wherein the Stalinist minister of the interior, Tomás Borge, vowed that the 70,000-man Sandinista army and Nicaragua's Securitate would never accept an opposition victory. Ninety percent of the registered voters turned out. Fifty-five percent of them voted for Violeta Chamorro, identified by friend and foe as the "U.S.-backed" democratic opposition candidate, and 40.8 percent for Ortega.

Three cheers for the Nicaraguans. And for Chamorro. And for the United Nations and the Organization of American States, whose highly visible presence not only on election day but throughout the campaign gave the voters heart and kept the Sandinistas from doing their worst. And for Jimmy Carter, whose creative free-lance diplomacy helped keep the observers honest and the participants on both sides committed to "the process."

We say all this not only because we feel it, but also because so many in the American media have been grudging in their enthusiasm for the outcome. In contrast, the TV networks and National Public Radio greeted Nelson Mandela's release with unalloyed joy, and promptly granted South Africa an extended honeymoon in which positive news (such as Mandela's call for an end to black-on-black violence) is played up and negative news (such as the violence itself) played down. The same, by and large, has gone for Eastern Europe, where the media have celebrated the advances and deemphasized the difficulties. Yet Chamorro's victory was less than a day old when the American news industry began to express doubts about whether her fourteen-party National Opposition Union, ranging from Communists to former contras and Social Democrats to Conservatives, could possibly govern the country.

We say—we've been saying, month after month—three cheers for the Eastern Europeans, the South Africans, the Panamanians, the Lithuanians, and now, the Nicaraguans. And cheers for the Filipinos, South Koreans, Argentineans, Brazilians, Ecuadorans, Uruguayans, Taiwanese, and Salvadorans—for all those who have moved from dictatorship to (or toward) democracy. Praise and gratitude, too, to those who are still trying against heavy odds, especially in the Soviet Union, and to those who have tried and (for the moment) failed, notably the Haitians, Tibetans, Burmese, and Chinese.

Let us be proud about this: the fundamental political values (and also the national interests) of the United States of America won in Nicaragua as well. From a dictatorship allied with Fidel Castro, Erich Honecker, Manuel Noriega, and Muammar Qaddafi, Nicaragua has voted to transform itself into a friend of the United States. Violeta Chamorro openly took aid from the United States, got photographed with President Bush before the campaign, and even refused Carter's urgings to make denunciation of the U.S.-backed contras a centerpiece of her campaign.

This does not mean that American policy has been

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correct in every aspect—far from it. In 1981 the Reagan administration would have been better off continuing Carter's policy of forbearance toward the Sandinistas, so that the onus for their turn toward despotism and the Soviet Union would have been unmistakably on their heads, not ours. Instead, Reagan's CIA sponsored training for the contras by veterans of Argentina's murderous "dirty war" and was none too scrupulous about enlisting former cutthroats from Anastasio Somoza's National Guard into the force. The CIA mined Nicaraguan harbors, bringing international condemnation down upon the contra operation. The main emphasis of Reagan policy was on military aid and military victory—and military victory, which would have ushered in an era of El Salvador-like guerrilla war, would have been infinitely less desirable than the electoral victory that has in fact ensued. Yet the political side of the struggle was given short shrift both in Nicaragua and in the United States. When Reagan lost congressional support, his aides violated the law to keep U.S. military aid flowing. And when President Oscar Arias of Costa Rica came along with a plan to end the Nicaraguan conflict through democratic elections, the administration fought it bitterly, believing the Sandinistas could never be induced to relinquish power.

From the moment they took power in 1979, the Sandinistas looked to Castro as their mentor. They set up an East German-trained security apparat, harassed the Roman Catholic Church, brutally uprooted the Miskito Indians, and began giving arms to Communist guerrillas in El Salvador. Documents surfacing after 1979 (notably the 1977 basic strategy document) showed that the Sandinistas' purpose was to "develop along progressive Marxist-Leninist lines." On June 23, 1981, Defense Minister Humberto Ortega said to officers of his army, "Marxism-Leninism is the scientific doctrine that guides our revolution."

When Arias developed his peace plan, its offer to the Sandinistas was that the contras would be disbanded in exchange for the opening up of the Nicaraguan political system and the holding of free elections. Without the contras, Arias would have had no occasion to offer the deal, and Ortega would have had no reason to accept it. Ortega thought he could win the election by overpowering the opposition with the massed resources of the state. He thought so right up to the moment the returns started coming in.

Those who supported aid to the contras in the great Nicaragua policy debate that raged in Washington throughout the 1980s, as did this magazine, can find considerable vindication in the outcome. But as it turned out, the trail to that outcome was blazed by a kind of symbiotic alliance-through-conflict between supporters and opponents of contra aid. We confess that we doubted the Arias plan could work, because it contained no sanctions if the Sandinistas reneged on their promises. But when—thanks largely to the tenacious efforts of the then Speaker of the House, Jim Wright—the Arias plan became the basis of both congressional and administration policy, we urged that American and international observers descend upon Nicaragua in droves to make sure that if the Sandinistas cheated, the world would know. We also urged continued humanitarian aid to the contras, to keep the force alive as a hedge against Sandinista cheating.

We're glad to say we were wrong about Arias. He richly deserves the 1987 Nobel Peace Prize and the world's thanks for seeing possibilities in Central America's crisis that we and others did not see. Perhaps a few of those in Congress, the media, the churches, and academia who backed the Arias peace plan saw in it, as Arias himself did, the possibility that Nicaragua might be liberated from the Sandinistas. But most of them, we suspect, saw the plan simply as a convenient way to kill off the contras for good, even if that meant delivering Nicaragua permanently into the hands of the Sandinistas.

As the Nicaraguan election campaign drew to an end, it became something close to conventional wisdom in Washington that Chamorro would lose. In Congress the only member to predict the Chamorro landslide was Representative Stephen Solarz. Most commentators and all the television networks, believing in the poll results, took it as a foregone conclusion that the Sandinistas would win. Some on the left thought Chamorro would lose because she deserved to lose, tied as she was to the United States. Meanwhile, some on the right thought she would lose because the Sandinistas would successfully steal the election and international observers would be too callow to prevent the theft. The outcome surprised both sides—and made nonsense of both the left-wing myth that anti-Yankeeism is the centerpiece of all Latin America's political identity and the right-wing myth that Leninists can never be induced to change.

Gratifying as the election results are, democracy is not yet quite safe in Nicaragua. Ortega at first accepted his defeat with good grace. But the next day he began imposing conditions for the transfer of power—notably, the disbanding of the contras. Meanwhile, Borge and Humberto Ortega declared that the Sandinistas would not relinquish control of the secret police or the army to the elected government. The danger now is that, following an all-too-

Henry Fairlie, the eminent British essayist and journalist who was a beloved member of THE NEW REPUBLIC family for fifteen years, has died. He succumbed to heart failure at the age of 66 on Sunday, February 25, at the George Washington University Medical Center, where he had been admitted eleven days earlier after falling and breaking his hip on the sidewalk outside the office.

Next week's issue of THE NEW REPUBLIC will carry an appreciation of Henry Fairlie and his work. This week, with pride and grief, we publish—on page 37—his last article, the galleys of which he corrected from his hospital bed.

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common Central American pattern, they intend to turn Nicaragua into a kind of left-wing Guatemala: nominal civilian rule, with the military always on hand to stage a coup.

We hope that Chamorro will be able to convert this transition crisis to her advantage by announcing her intent to transform Nicaragua into a demilitarized state on the model of Costa Rica. She ought to be able to get help from both the Soviet Union and the United States in intervening with their proxies to give up their arms in an orderly way. Mikhail Gorbachev can make it clear to Fidel Castro that continuing Soviet subsidies to Cuba depend upon Havana's going along with the program. President Bush should ask Congress posthaste to convert humanitarian aid to the contras into resettlement and disarmament assistance.

Chamorro obviously has daunting work ahead of her in repairing her country's economy and social fabric after eleven years of civil war, mismanagement, corruption, and U.S. military and economic pressure. She is not an experienced politician, and it's important that she not repeat the errors of that other heroine of people power, Corazon Aquino, who has allowed loyalty to family and to cronies to threaten the survival of democracy in the Philippines.

In the aftermath of the Chamorro victory, as in the months following Aquino's victory, Washington will be brimming with promises of support for the new democracy. Yet this year Congress and the administration have fallen $96 million short of the $418 million promised to the Philippines just last year. Joyous as Americans have been over Poland's deliverance from communism, the administration thinks it can afford only $400 million to smooth the way to democracy. There is far less for Hungary and Czechoslovakia. The administration is budgeting $1 billion to repair Panama, but it's not clear that Congress will go along. There is renewed talk of chopping aid to present recipients for redistribution to newly minted democracies.

This would be a travesty. Worse, it would mean abandoning America's mission in the world just at the moment of victory. Having served as an inspiration for the triumph of democracy in our time, the United States now has an opportunity to see to it that democracy prevails. This means spending money—for economic development, health, education, and land reform. Even more, it means developing strategies for teaching newly free nations how to establish the institutions that will sustain democracy. This is a worldwide undertaking requiring different approaches in different contexts, but everywhere this country should be promoting not just free elections but the establishment of an independent judiciary, a free press, credit and property rights for small-scale businesspeople, and open markets. As the cold war ends, the United States has less need to spend its money and energy as a military superpower. Some of that money and energy should go to helping make permanent the democratic development that our past efforts have made possible.

FLIGHT PLANS

Three months ago the Soviet Union signed an agreement with the State of Israel providing for direct flights on El Al and Aeroflot between Moscow and Tel Aviv. This was no ordinary air transport arrangement, but a response to the palpable desire of hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jews to leave the U.S.S.R. and live in Israel. Though there had always been a steady trickle of Jewish emigrants, many of them coming to the United States, the Kremlin closed the exits to vast numbers who applied to leave. These were the refuseniks, prisoners of a regime that could not—that refused to—admit that so many of its subjects wanted only to uproot themselves and flee. Then, as Mikhail Gorbachev began to shuck off the repressive habits that had brought so much opprobrium on his country, Soviet policy changed. The Jews could go if they wanted to—and this January alone, almost as many arrived in Israel as during all of 1989.

That was one of glasnost's accompaniments. Another has been a ferocious increase in populist anti-Semitism, which has surfaced not only in Muslim areas but in the Ukraine and in Moscow and Leningrad as well, and which has more than made up for the decline in the government-sponsored brand. The number of Jews who are desperate to leave has swelled as a result. The hard-won decision to accommodate this exodus by permitting direct flights was an uncharacteristically responsible act. And responsibility was called for: for decades anti-Semitism had been one of the Party's hole cards, there to be played whenever the regime felt threatened. No wonder the hatreds of pre-revolutionary Russia survived seven decades of communism. And no wonder, perhaps, that Moscow has had second thoughts about its airline accord with Jerusalem.

The Soviets justify their reneging by pointing to Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's mindless statement to a meeting of his party a while back that the expected big new migration from Russia requires a big Israel. Shamir's remark was the perfect excuse for Moscow to back out of its agreement. Along the way, the U.S.S.R. could recoup a bit of its lost cachet with Arab clients by saying it wouldn't be a party in this way to the settling of these migrants in the occupied territories.

In point of fact, the issue of Soviet Jews in the territories is a red herring. It was sheer internal party polemics on Shamir's part, unrelated to any programs or policies. If the Israeli government ever actually embarked on a program of settling the immigrants from Russia in the West Bank and Gaza, these highly desirable people would simply stop coming. They are not about to leave their homes in unfriendly places like Tashkent and Baku in order to plant themselves among even unfriendlier Arabs. It's doubtful there are 250 Russian Jews among the 70,000 or so settlers in the

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disputed areas. The absorption ministry would like the Soviet émigrés to settle primarily in the underpopulated Galilee and Negev. Most of them will probably end up staying in Tel Aviv or Haifa. It's a free country.

The hullabaloo, then, is not really about the occupied territories at all, but about Jewish immigrants to the Jewish commonwealth—the same issue that has provoked Arab enmity for seven decades. The migration of an anticipated half million Soviet Jews shows the resilience and the relevance of the Zionist enterprise. And far from making the Israelis more intransigent, the morale boost provided by so many new citizens is likely to give them the confidence to concede more than they otherwise might in their efforts to persuade the Arabs to peace.

Fewer Jews will surely come if the Soviets persist in impeding and complicating their movements. But the numbers will be immense even then. Still, Moscow must decide whether to pit itself against the destiny so many of its Jews have chosen for themselves. On several occasions Gorbachev has reiterated that the new leadership sees freedom of movement as one of those freedoms it wants to restore. The Jews are testing this commitment at the gates. How he and his government deal with the aborted non-stop arrangements will let the world know whether the Soviet Union can be trusted to honor its undertakings and to treat its subjects as if they were free.

There is now a proposal in Congress to lift the U.S. trade restrictions with the Soviet Union mandated by the Jackson-Vanik amendment. That amendment was passed as our country's way of forcing Moscow's hand on free migration. It would be a terrible travesty and an encouragement to Kremlin backsliders if Jackson-Vanik were to be repealed before the Moscow-Tel Aviv direct flights, on which so many Jews depend and to which the Soviets had committed themselves, had become routine.

NOTEBOOK

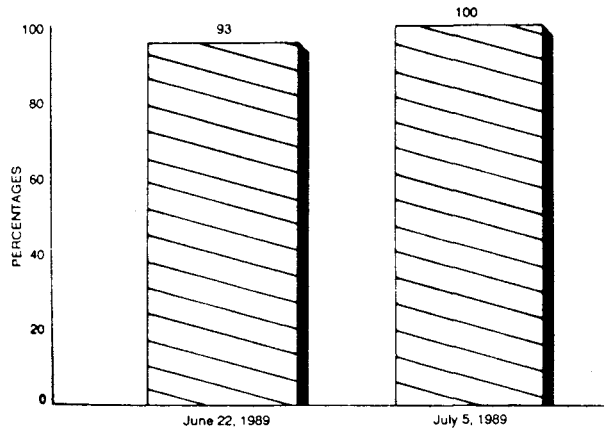
THE COURTER CARTWHEEL: The judges have gone home. The janitor is sweeping under the bleachers. But out on the lonely gym floor, Representative Jim Courter is still practicing abortion flip-flops. Courter, who, it may be remembered, ran for the New Jersey governorship on a strong anti-abortion position, now faces a challenge to his congressional seat from a pro-choice Democrat, Marguerite Chandler. So he recently decided that "freedom to choose was not only correct, but more consistent with my overall philosophy of individual liberty and freedom." The irony here is that this appears to be what Courter really does think; he only began to peddle a pro-life line in the early 1980s when that looked like the way to get elected. But as in the fable about the boy who cried wolf, now that Courter is telling the truth, nobody believes him.

CASTRO THE BASTARDS: A recent volume published in English by the Cuban government-run José Martí Publishing House documents the show trial of the late General Arnaldo Ochoa Sánchez, et al., for drug dealing and corruption. As this bar graph from the book demonstrates, all of Havana now agrees the late defendants were jerks, scumbags, real bad guys:

THE PEOPLE'S OPINION

Throughout the trial carried out against Ochoa, De la Guardia and his group, public opinion was systematically surveyed by the National Commission for Studies on Public Opinion, in order to find out how these events were reflected by the population. From June 22 to July 8, several surveys and polls comprising a total of 12,000 persons were conducted nationwide.

OPINION ON THE ACCUSED
Traitors, immoral, corrupt, guilty



DO I HEAR FOUR?

100,000 AT RALLY IN MOSCOW URGE DEMOCRATIC CHANGES; CRUCIAL PARTY TALKS TODAY

—*The New York Times*, February 5

In Moscow, 200,000 rally for change

—*The Boston Globe*, same day

300,000 take to streets of Moscow

—*Boston Herald*, same day

(thanks to Philip Averbuck, Watertown, Massachusetts)

JIVE TURKEYS REVISITED: *Time*, which thinks Arsenio Hall leads his audience in a chant of "wooh! wooh!" (see Notebook, December 25, 1989), is having a little trouble with rap lyrics as well. In a February 5 story called "Yo! Rap Gets on the Map," it quotes the following lines from the song "I think I can Beat Mike Tyson," by DJ Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince: "The general public though I was a fool/I was gettin' dished but I guess that was cool/Ya know, gettin' dished is never good/But I was

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even gettin' dished in my own neighborhood." As Michael MacCambridge, pop music critic for the *Austin American-Statesman*, points out, you don't have to be a tenured historian of hip-hop to know that rappers do not "dish." Liz Smith dishes. Rappers "dis," which is short for "disrespect" and means to insult or criticize. The term is so common in rap lyrics, MacCambridge writes, "that *Time* could only have committed a more egregious error by misspelling Yo!" Yough, *Newsweek*! Eeoh, *U.S. News*! •

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

RAGING BULLS

By Fred Barnes

The occasion was Vice President Dan Quayle's forty-third birthday on February 4. The place was the Naval Observatory Residence, the veep's mansion in Northwest Washington. The Quayles had invited a few couples that evening for a small celebration over dinner. It turned out to be a working dinner. John Sununu, the White House chief of staff, brought a draft of the speech President Bush was to give the next morning to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The text had gone through several permutations since William Reilly, the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, submitted a first draft. Bush's speechwriters had overhauled the language; Sununu had kept the tone from being hysterical on global warming. Now the final editors, Sununu and budget director Richard Darman, penciled in last-minute changes as they dined.

The Sununu-Darman axis endures. It's the most important alliance inside the administration, and it's getting stronger. Sununu and Darman are virtually the sole arbiters of domestic policy. They devise Bush's legislative strategy and usually execute it. Their interests, obsessions, and ideological leanings shape the administration almost as much as Bush's do. The emphasis on research and development, space exploration, math and science teaching are Sununu-Darman preoccupations. The practice of drawing lines in the sand with Congress and of threatening vetoes are Sununu-Darman tactics.

A senior White House official calls them "raging bulls who paw the earth and snort." In discussions they are outspoken and intimidating. When they take a position at senior staff meetings, few challenge them. "When Sununu and Darman agree, everyone else is deferential," says an official. In crafting policies, "we have strong, hot discussions," says Sununu. "I find it's part of the fun of the job. Darman does too." More often than not, they wind up agreeing. Sununu, it seems, is less conservative than he's cracked up to be, Darman more conservative.

The two met in 1988 when Bush gathered his advisers for political strategy sessions in Kennebunkport on Memorial Day weekend. Sununu was governor of New Hampshire. Darman had left the Reagan administration and, in a brief interlude outside government, was working as an investment banker for Shearson Lehman. They were asked to brief reporters on the sessions. Darman says he took "an instant liking" to Sununu. "It was obvious to me right away that he had a good combination of substance, quickness, and political instinct." Shortly before election day, they talked about jobs in the administration. Sununu was eyeing chief of staff and said he'd like Darman on board. Darman said he wanted to be budget chief.

Sununu and Darman are more alike than anyone suspected. They're smart, arrogant policy nerds who are infatuated with politics and power. They're keen on scientific evidence, quantitative analysis, computers, etc. This and their academic backgrounds—Sununu taught at Tufts, Darman at Harvard—make them unusual in Washington. In domestic policy-making, they're inclined toward free market solutions like tax cuts and regulations with, as Sununu puts it, "minimum negative impact" on the economy. "We both believe the American system, if not constrained by overregulation, can be the most competitive in the world," he says. I don't think Darman would put it exactly that way—he'd mention overconsumption and the low savings rate—but he's in rough accord.

On environmental issues, Sununu and Darman are even closer, and increasingly influential. This means they're pitted against Reilly. Sununu took the heat from environmental groups for blocking Reilly's bid to inject words of alarm about global warming in Bush's February 5 speech. But Darman participated heavily in the editing. For months Sununu and Darman have been collecting data on global warming. When Darman sent ten articles from science journals on the subject to Sununu, the chief of staff fired back several studies by MIT professors. Recently Sununu has been touting a study showing the temperature in the southern half of the United States has dropped 1.1 degrees in the last thirty years and another that found the temperature of the oceans hasn't changed in 100 years.

In any case, the Bush speech reflected Sununu-Darman thinking. Bush said the scientific jury is still out on global warming. In fact, he didn't use the term "global warming" at all. "The United States will continue its efforts to improve our understanding of climate change—to seek hard data, accurate models, and new ways to improve the science—and determine how best to meet these tremendous challenges," he said. "Where politics and opinion have outpaced the science, we are accelerating our support of the technology to bridge

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that gap." As for solutions, "Wherever possible, we believe that market mechanisms should be applied and that our policies must be consistent with economic growth and free market principles in all countries."

Reilly lost that skirmish but won an earlier battle over Bush's proposal to revise the Clean Air Act. After that, Darman refused to deal personally with Reilly, leaving that to his aide Robert Grady and Sununu. Darman was convinced that Reilly leaked false information about him. Now White House officials suspect Reilly has done the same to Sununu on global warming and a wetlands decision. "I've talked to Reilly about it," says Sununu. "He says he's not [leaking]. I believe him." Sununu says low-level bureaucrats must be responsible. In any case, the controversy has tightened the Sununu-Darman bond. Sununu jokingly calls himself "the environmental chief of staff."

When the clean air proposal was dispatched to Congress last spring, Reilly assured the White House that environmentalists and Democratic leaders would rally around it. They did, but soon they were pushing for more. The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee passed a bill that horrified the White House. Splitting the difference with the committee was ruled out because the Bush bill was as far as the White House is willing to go. Darman dreamed up the idea of a letter to Majority Leader George Mitchell that set a ceiling, in dollars, on the economic costs Bush would swallow in a clean air bill. Darman took his idea to Sununu, and a letter over Bush's name was sent on January 19.

This was the Sununu-Darman tactic of drawing a line. Bush said his measure would cost the economy $19 billion annually. He'd accept ten percent more—$21 billion—but no more. "I want to sign a clean air bill this year, so the 1990s can indeed be known as the 'Clean Air decade.' But I will only sign legislation that balances environmental and economic progress." The word "and" was underlined. Though the letter never mentioned a veto, it was a veto threat nonetheless. Bush doesn't relish a veto of environmental legislation, but now that the line is drawn he may have to.

Sununu refers to this tactic as setting "the hard parameters." He used it in New Hampshire with some success, and it worked for the most part when Bush proposed an increase in the minimum wage. "The easiest way to let [legislators] know if they can support you is to let them know what your position is," he says. "You ought to be able to let people know where the president stands and then go forward." Of course, this doesn't leave much room for maneuvering. Reagan used a different approach. He announced a position, held to it as long as possible, then compromised if pressured enough. With the Sununu-Darman approach, Bush compromises at the start, then insists he can yield no more.

This sounds like a scheme for blocking legislation. It isn't. Sununu and Darman—and Bush, too—"do want to legislate," says a White House official. "They do want to govern." They want a clean air bill, child care legislation, more spending on math and science, a new federal commitment to research and development, and so on. But they want it all on their terms. They understand the paradox of White House relations with Congress. "Because Reagan was strong, his aides could be accommodating," the official says. "Because Bush seems soft, we've got to be tough."

On February 15 Sununu and Darman met with Republican congressional leaders. Sununu was blunt. Bush would veto any bill compelling businesses to grant maternity leave. House GOP Leader Robert Michel was taken aback. "It'll be hard to vote against maternal leave in an election year," he said. "Are you really going to stick with this?" Yep, said Sununu. The Sununu-Darman axis had spoken. •

Schemes of reunification.

KOHLS APART

By Pierre Lellouche

PARIS

As was to be expected, the extremely rapid pace of the German unification process is prompting anxiety all over Europe, not to mention Moscow and Washington.

The most vocal are of course the Poles, worried about their Oder-Neisse border, which Chancellor Helmut Kohl—in order to placate the nationalists on his far right—has failed to confirm publicly in clear language. In his Camp David meeting with George Bush on February 24 and 25, he went as far as saying the "border question will be settled definitely by a freely elected all-German government," which means after unification. Margaret Thatcher, after a long, grudging silence, finally stated that German unification, though "inevitable," is more than a matter of the "sensitivities of the German states," emphasizing that "the feelings and interests of the other European countries" should be taken into account. In Paris a similar malaise is visible; a new debate is starting about how to check an overly powerful Germany in the center of Europe and whether it will kill the European Economic Community. The French are beginning to realize that post-Yalta Europe may well signal the end of French dreams of grandeur and French-controlled European "federation."

Even before the Camp David meeting, senior American officials confessed in private that no one is in control of intra-German developments and that they too are worried. And in Moscow Mikhail Gorbachev is openly attacked both by the army and by Yegor Ligachev for having "lost" East Germany and the Warsaw

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Pact, a not insignificant matter in a country that is still deeply scarred by its 20 million dead in World War II. The green light given to Kohl by the Soviet leader is being turned into a yellow light, as the Soviets insist once again on the neutralization of the future Germany.

There are, of course, some pretty good reasons for such qualms. German "sensitivities" or not, it is a fact that Germany has left quite a mark on Europe over the past century. Granted that the young Germans of today should not bear forever the sins of their fathers and grandfathers, the question of where Germany ends (in terms of territory) and how and where it uses its power has haunted the modern history of Europe. After forty-five years the problem has come back to haunt all of us, disrupting in the process the structures that were created precisely to contain it: namely the alliances and the European Community. Like it or not, the future shape and weight of Germany will directly influence the prosperity, stability, and peace of the whole continent. This is what participants in the recent Ottawa ministerial meeting called "the external aspects" of German unification.

At the urging of the Bush administration, and with the support of the Kohl government, the formula adopted in Ottawa to resolve these issues is a two-step forum called "two plus four." The two Germanys will meet first, immediately after the March 18 elections in the German Democratic Republic, to work out their own unification procedure. In a second stage, the "two" will then sit down with the "four": the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, and France—the victors of World War II, which have rights in Berlin and forces on German soil.

Initially the British, Soviet, and French foreign ministers refused "two plus four," preferring instead "four plus zero," that is, to agree on a settlement of the status of Germany first and then impose it on the Germans. But "four plus zero" could not work for at least two reasons. First, the four do not share the same view of the future of Germany: the United States, Britain, and France would like it to remain in NATO, preferably with their own forces still deployed there, albeit in smaller numbers than today. For the Soviets the issue is hardly so straightforward. Official Soviet policy since 1952 has been to conceive of German unification only in exchange for the complete neutralization of that country, which implies that U.S. forces would be expelled from Europe. In private, however, many of Gorbachev's top experts now understand that neutralization simply cannot work: Germany, with its 80 million people and the third-largest economy in the world, is simply too big and powerful to be neutral.

Since the Soviets understand that it is too late to stop unification, many in Moscow conclude that between two evils, it is better to keep Germany in NATO and allow the United States to control it than to see it rebuild its military power one day without alliance constraints. The trouble is that Gorbachev, too, has problems at home. It will be difficult to convince Ligachev and the growing nationalist Russian coalition in the U.S.S.R. that not only is Germany to be unified but it is also to remain in the "American camp." So when Gorbachev received Baker and then Kohl early in February, he was noncommittal about the NATO membership issue and the status of foreign forces in Germany. Since then, the Soviets have toughened up on the neutralization issue.

The other objection to "four plus zero" was German "sensitivities." After forty-five years of impeccable democratic credentials, it would have been awkward at best to try to impose a status on Germany from the outside, thus seeming to repeat the tragic mistake of the Versailles Treaty and leaving Germans with the bitter taste of once again having been "victimized." Hence the "two plus four" compromise, in which, in effect, the four powers will give their blessings to what the Germans themselves decide, with the hope on the American side that the Germans will decide to stay in NATO.

This approach obviously satisfies the German demand for "full sovereignty." But for the rest of us "two plus four" carries many uncertainties and problems. The first is that this approach will turn the four powers' meeting into a pure formality. This, inevitably, will create the not unreasonable perception that the "great powers" simply no longer have power, and that the new and single most important actor in today's Europe is once again Germany. Linked to this is the fact that "two plus four" excludes many other countries (notably Poland) whose security is directly at stake in the process and who have no hope for settlement of their claim until unification is over, and probably the two German elections as well. That is asking quite a lot.

Moreover, there is simply no guarantee that "two plus four" will lead to a Germany strongly tied to NATO. The main reason again is domestic politics. This is an election year in West Germany too. Even if Kohl wants to stay in NATO, he has to take into account two things: that the GDR elections will be most probably won by the local "Ost" SPD, which is against NATO and for neutrality, and that in the Federal Republic of Germany itself the SPD is increasingly taking an anti-NATO line. So far in the FRG senior SPD politicians have carefully avoided stating that NATO should be discarded altogether, but they have said as much, if more politely, in insisting that NATO's military role is now finished and that both alliances should be merged into a kind of Gorbachevian Common European House.

Kohl already has had to agree that NATO should not be extended to East German territory, excluding all West German forces as well from being deployed there, which is tantamount to the de facto neutralization and demilitarization of half of tomorrow's Germany. This will undoubtedly create a major instability, for there cannot be two kinds of sovereignty and two kinds of security arrangements in one single territory. It is also noteworthy that following his Camp David meeting with Bush, Kohl emphasized that whatever U.S. and Soviet troops would remain in Central Europe, that is, in Germany, would be there for a "transitional period." As time goes by, and with the SPD line being what it is and the Soviets likely to

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press for the full withdrawal of all forces, we may well have, sooner than we think, a Germany without any outside forces, and any nuclear weapons.

A further uncertainty comes from the timing of the "two plus four" process. Assuming that immediately after the March 18 elections the newly formed East German parliament votes to accede to the West German Federation, a simple vote of the Bundestag under Article 23 of the West German Constitution will suffice to establish legally a single German state. At this point "two plus four" will have become "one plus four," and the West German elections scheduled for December 2 will have to be enlarged to include all of Germany.

This new "one" Germany will contain about 8 million to 10 million formerly East German voters, who will be largely SPD and anti-NATO. This is bound to disrupt Chancellor Kohl's precarious majority in the former West Germany. Until now the electoral debate in West Germany has been about who is best suited—Kohl or his SPD challenger, Oskar Lafontaine—to conduct the country's unification. Obviously Kohl has done quite well so far. But suppose that unification takes place by this spring. Then the issue will be not about unification but about its terms and conditions, in particular security issues. In this new situation, an SPD-neutralist platform may well be the most popular in a country where a strong majority will be tempted to get rid of all foreign forces as fast as possible. And this is bound to influence in turn Kohl's own rhetoric of the NATO issue.

Thus the diplomatic compromise set up in Ottawa to resolve the "external aspects" of tomorrow's Germany may have already been overtaken by events. Ultimately, whether Germany remains anchored to the West and a key contributor to peace and stability on the continent will depend on the wisdom of the German people themselves. History will tell whether the Germans too have learned from their history.

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Chamorro's compromising position.

LET'S MAKE A DEAL

By Tom Gjelten

MANAGUA

For a country that had just delivered its government a stunning election defeat, the celebrations following the victory of Violeta Chamorro and her National Opposition Union (UNO) were strikingly subdued. UNO victory rallies were small, mostly private affairs, and there was no mass outpouring into the streets. Most people stayed home. It was as though Nicaraguans were shocked at what they had done, and a little nervous as they contemplated the consequences. They know the election does not mean the end of Sandinismo, and the idea of a peaceful transfer of power from the Sandinistas to their bitter enemies is still hard to imagine.

For his part, Daniel Ortega was gracious in defeat. He stood humbly facing more than a thousand journalists and *internacionalista* supporters and pledged that his government would "respect the popular mandate." But the absence of Ortega's brother Humberto, commander of the Sandinista army, and of Interior Minister Tomás Borge hinted that the Sandinistas will try to hold on to as much of their military and police power as possible, even while ceding civilian authority to the new government.

And under Chamorro, the army and police forces will probably remain sympathetic to the Sandinista cause. Virtually the entire top officers' echelon of the Popular Sandinista Army is composed of Sandinista *militantes*, zealously committed to their party's political goals. The Sandinista Police, formed along the lines of a model developed in Eastern European Communist regimes, derives its exceptional discipline and professionalism at least in part from its rigorous ideological preparation. In a speech to the party faithful two days after the election, Ortega declared that the Sandinista Front would defend "the integrity and the professionalism" of the army and the police. If the Chamorro government tries forcefully to dismantle the security forces, the move could meet violent resistance. The Sandinista Front also controls mass groups of *campesinos*, women, and trade union members, who could be mobilized in a party struggle.

In a speech two weeks before the election, Borge warned that an UNO triumph would leave Nicaragua "ungovernable." As reported by the official Sandinista newspaper *Barricada*, Borge asked how the "revolutionary" armed forces could obey commands that came from UNO-appointed defense and interior ministers. There would be chaos in Nicaragua, he was quoted as saying. The remarks were evidently intended to persuade voters that an UNO victory would have alarming consequences. But Borge's warning now serves as a threat to the incoming government. Carlos Carrion, the Sandinista candidate who sought reelection as mayor of Managua, said in a postelection interview with *Barricada*: "To try to govern without taking the Sandinista Front into account would be an error, since it is the force that guarantees political stability, even as the opposition."

The Sandinistas can rightfully say there is more democracy in Nicaragua today than there ever was under the Somoza dictatorship. By guaranteeing free elections and inviting nearly 3,000 official observers to monitor the procedure, they did their part to advance

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the cause of pluralism in Nicaragua. But they did not fully grasp a basic axiom: under democracy, outcomes are uncertain.

They vainly assumed that they had the people on their side. Sandinista leaders, Ortega included, boasted there was not even a hypothetical chance that they could lose. Part of this bravado was intended to attract voters who wanted only to be on the winning side. But the Sandinistas evidently came to believe their own propaganda, and they were blindsided by their defeat. The failure of their political intelligence raises the questions of whether Sandinistas know Nicaraguans as well as they claim, and whether their party is well prepared for the competitive challenge of democratic pluralism.

In defeat, the Sandinistas seem to have gained humility. On the morning after, *Barricada* reported the results without comment. Gone were the vitriolic attacks on UNO. Daniel Ortega swallowed his pride and visited Chamorro at her home to demonstrate his recognition of her victory. "Since his concession speech, Ortega's moral standing in Nicaragua has skyrocketed," says Arturo Cruz, who set out to oppose Ortega in the disputed 1984 presidential election and eventually became a political director of the contra movement.

But the Sandinistas have not abandoned the rhetoric of revolution, or surrendered their claim to have a vanguard role in Nicaraguan society. In his post-election speech to party militants, Ortega said the change of government in Nicaragua "will by no means signify the end of the Revolution" because the Sandinista Front will not allow the achievements of the Revolution to be reversed. But how many people can the Sandinistas count on to support such a struggle? It may not be easy for the Sandinista Front to maintain its militancy. Much of its political power derived from its occupation of the government and its distribution of the privileges that go with that. Once they lose their Soviet-made Lada cars, their free housing, and their opportunities for overseas travel, how many Sandinistas *militantes* will leave the fold? Once the Sandinista organizations lose their state backing, how many will survive?

There is also the problem of divisions within the Sandinista Front. Without his ex officio status, Ortega will have to rely on moral authority to exert his influence. "Throughout his presidency," says Mario Arana, a political analyst at CRIES, a pro-Sandinista think tank in Managua. "Ortega has faced the criticism that he was giving up too much ground, such as when he agreed to negotiate with the contras. Now those people will argue they have been proven correct."

As the opposition, the Sandinistas can choose from a range of strategies. They could set out to topple the UNO government, a task some Sandinista leaders have boasted would be easy. The political weakness of the new government coalition is undeniable. The fourteen parties that constitute the alliance barely contained their rivalries during the campaign; maintaining a united government will prove exceedingly difficult. And in the short term, the massive economic problems faced by the new government will be no easier to solve than they have been under the reform policies of born-again Sandinista free marketeers. Whether the Sandinistas could make Nicaragua ungovernable is debatable, but they could come close to it.

An alternate strategy would be for the Sandinistas to behave as a loyal opposition, with the goal of recapturing the government in the next round of elections, six years from now. Although the UNO coalition will hold a fourteen-seat advantage in the new National Assembly, the Sandinista Front will be the largest single political party in the legislature, which puts it in a strong position to work toward breaking up UNO's majority. The Sandinistas also control two daily newspapers and numerous radio stations.

Governmental powers will be transferred to UNO on April 25. In the meantime, negotiations will be intense. Both sides are under extreme pressure to accommodate popular demands for reconciliation. Former opposition activists such as Cruz are counseling the Chamorro team on how to negotiate with the Sandinistas. "They must be very prudent," he says. "They cannot force the Sandinistas into a corner." Cruz and others are recommending that the new government yield to demands that Sandinista officers remain in their posts, at least for a while. The government may even allow Humberto Ortega to stay on as the army commander, though the Chamorro team will ask that the Sandinista Front sever direct ties with the military and that all support for the guerrilla forces in El Salvador be abandoned. The new civilian government should have budgetary authority over the military, so Sandinista influence will inevitably be limited. Even so, any concessions to the Sandinistas could prove politically awkward for the Chamorro transition team. Antonio Lacayo, who managed Chamorro's campaign, told reporters after the election that the makeup of the armed forces was "non-negotiable." But Lacayo himself is a partner with the Sandinista government in a huge agricultural enterprise and has long been a leading advocate of reconciliation between Sandinista and opposition forces in Nicaragua.

Without some kind of agreement, Nicaraguans face a bleak future. The new government may feel justified in denying the Sandinistas any special treatment, given their resounding victory in elections designed by the Sandinistas themselves. But the policy would do little to usher in the era of peace that Chamorro repeatedly promised in her campaign. Meanwhile, the Sandinistas may be tempted to return to combative struggle and demonstrate to the world that they retain their capacity for toppling a government, even if they can't win a fair election. But starting another war in their beleaguered country is hardly a way for the Sandinistas to secure the place in Nicaraguan history they so earnestly desire.

TOM GJELTEN is Latin American correspondent for National Public Radio.

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The story the media missed.

Oops

By Robert S. Leiken

I missed the Nicaraguan election story. But then so did just about everybody. In my case it was because the Sandinista government refused to let me in. The explanation for the others is more complicated.

Actually there were two Nicaraguan election stories. One was the opposition coalition's remarkable, even revolutionary, "upset" victory. The other was the fact that practically every American pollster, pundit, news organization, and Latin America expert felt certain that the Sandinistas would win by a wide margin. The confluence of these two stories tells us as much about ourselves as about Nicaragua.

On February 12 I once again became an embarrassment to my friends by forecasting a Sandinista defeat in a *New York Times* op-ed piece. It provoked the usual bushel of bitter letters from professors.

It was not my prescience that explains why they got it wrong and I got it right. The signs were there for anyone who had eyes to see. The Sandinistas had presided over the economic destruction of Nicaragua: a ruined export economy; a ninety percent drop in living standards; massive unemployment and hunger; the exodus of nearly a fifth of its people, including most of its skilled workers and professionals (a vast voting bloc lost to the opposition). But it is a mistake to think that the Sandinistas' defeat was mainly a matter of economics. It became evident some time ago that the Sandinistas had lost their once nearly unanimous hold over the Nicaraguan heart. Before Ronald Reagan was in the White House and the contras were in the field, the Sandinistas began spreading a great fear through Nicaragua, assaulting and seeking to dismember every independent element of civil society: labor unions, the Church, the press, the family, the private sector, small farmers ("*kulaks*," they called them), the Indian community of the Atlantic Coast. The Sandinistas became the enemy of the people.

Back in August 1984, in the wake of a big, enthusiastic rally in Chinadega in support of the potential opposition candidate Arturo Cruz, it seemed Nicaragua was at the beginning of the same kind of political chain reaction—one rally building on another as people conquered their fear—that elected Violeta Chamorro on Sunday. But the government suppressed news of the event and then put obstacles in the path of the opposition, obstacles that some opposition politicians judged too great to overcome. These recalcitrants, apparently egged on by the CIA, created delays that handed the Sandinistas a pretext for barring the opposition from entering the elections. Had the opposition run, and had the Sandinistas let it run, many young Nicaraguan lives might have been spared.

In June 1985 hundreds of thousands of Nicaraguans defied the government by refusing to disperse as they awaited their newly invested cardinal's return from Rome. Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo, Nicaragua's most popular citizen, had also defied the government by calling for negotiations with the contras. In 1984 and again in 1987 before the termination of U.S. military aid, the contras had built a strong presence throughout the Nicaraguan countryside and were receiving extensive help from the local populace. And this winter opposition rallies swelled as peasants and workers came by foot for miles to greet the opposition candidate Violeta Chamorro.

But the general reader and viewer can certainly be pardoned for being surprised at the Chamorro upset. The rare news accounts of the aforementioned events were buried by reports attesting to the Sandinistas' popularity and the isolation of their opponents.

No American reporter forecast the Sandinistas' defeat, although a few, like Mark Uhlig of *The New York Times* and Juan Vasquez of CBS, signaled their readers and viewers that the American polls were not telling the whole story. In the week before the election an ABC/*Washington Post* survey put the Sandinistas ahead by a 3-to-2 margin. Reporting the survey, Peter Jennings intoned that it demonstrated "the failure of U.S. policy." In the days before the election ABC and NBC predicted a Sandinista victory "by a wide margin." An NBC "exclusive," originating from Managua but "confirmed" in Washington, revealed totally fictitious "negotiations" between the Bush administration and the Sandinista government. Ted Koppel framed Friday night's "Nightline" not around the election but around the normalization of relations between Nicaragua and the United States after the Sandinistas' victory. His guest, Jimmy Carter, had to remind him that the election had not yet been held and that polls were not necessarily accurate in a country where people "are afraid to speak their views to strangers."

As Representative Stephen Solarz, one of the few politicians clear-sighted and brave enough to buck the tide, explained on the MacNeil/Lehrer show, too many Americans seemed to think that Nicaragua was as transparent as Iowa, and that in a Nicaraguan election, as in an American one, the candidate with the bucks and the organization can be relied on to win. But the Sandinistas' millions (from Mexico and elsewhere) and minions did not suffice to compensate Nicaraguans for wrecking their society. The election became a referendum on a decade of dictatorship.

But what was especially odd about the ethnocentric conflation of Nicaragua and Iowa was that it afflicted

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many of the same people who for years have been telling us how irrelevant "American-style democracy" is to places like Nicaragua. The media missed this story because it never bothered to re-examine its own assumptions after Panama and Eastern Europe. What prevailed instead were, in Shirley Christian's catchy phrase, "the foregone conclusions of the Fourth Estate."

Christian was writing about the media's depiction of the Sandinistas before they came to power—as patriotic, pragmatic pluralists rather than as the dyed-in-the-wool Marxist-Leninists they always were. Many journalists approached the Nicaraguan election in the same spirit. It was but the last chapter in a Republican war against Nicaragua, a reprise of Vietnam. But along with the Sandinista *nomenklatura* and Fidel, the election's biggest loser was the post-Vietnam strain of American "liberalism." Legions of right-thinking tenured professors told the press that Nicaraguans blamed their desperate plight on the United States, that Nicaraguans considered the opposition a U.S. puppet from the same closet as the mercenary contras, and so forth. But the contemporary "liberal" myth that the United States is universally detested by the common people of Latin America should have been shattered by the Grenadian and Panamanian reactions to U.S. troops. And the notion that "American-style democracy" is attractive only to advanced industrial countries should have been put to rest by Poland, Romania, and Tiananmen Square.

The media failed to frame this story properly. But it must also be said that without the media and the pollsters and the observers the new Nicaraguan revolution never would have happened. They conveyed the message from Eastern Europe and Panama. And they put a spotlight on the Sandinistas from which they couldn't hide.

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An observer's observations.

POLL POSITION

By Bruce Babbitt

MATAGALPA, NICARAGUA

It is election eve in Matagalpa, high in the mountains of northern Nicaragua, and the city looks like a Sandinista jamboree. Black and red streamers hang on every utility pole, banners float above the narrow streets, the walls are splattered with Sandinista slogans. Even the tree trunks are painted red and black. Everywhere there are posters of Daniel Ortega smiling, hugging his daughter, and proclaiming, "Things will get better."

In reality Matagalpa is a hotbed of angry contra sympathizers and embittered opposition political leaders. At the office of the UNO opposition coalition we are briefed by Jaime Cuadra, a coffee grower with the face of a Spanish *hidalgo*. Last June two truckloads of Sandinista soldiers arrived to confiscate his 110-acre farm in retaliation for his involvement in grower protests against a Sandinista takeover of the marketing cooperative. But for the moment he has more urgent problems: there's word that Tomás Borge's security police have jailed twenty-five UNO organizers and poll watchers. To protect its election-day operation, UNO is directing its poll watchers, called *fiscales*, to leave home and spend the night in safehouses around the city.

At the Sandinista headquarters we are met by two unlikely "get out the vote" workers: a uniformed *comandante* of the security police and an armed Sandinista colonel. We are taken to a briefing room, where the colonel steps up to a large wall map and traces with a pointer the movements of contra units infiltrating through the mountain passes from Honduras. He frets that he does not have enough soldiers ready, since many of them will be traveling to their home bases to vote.

By nightfall a light rain is falling, and the streets are nearly empty except for trucks and jeeps flying the insignia of the United Nations and the Organization of American States. A young man in a red and black Sandinista T-shirt passes by, turns back to look at me, flashes his forefinger, the UNO victory sign, and quickly disappears. Most of the international observers are still predicting a Sandinista victory, and there isn't much evidence to the contrary. The Sandinistas have played this election like a pinball machine, shaking and jiggling it to improve the score, but never quite enough to light up the "tilt" sign.

Election precinct 802 is a two-room schoolhouse called Zapote at the bottom of a ravine surrounded by ragged green mountains speckled with tiny farm plots. It is 9:30 a.m., and 200 of the 463 inscribed voters are waiting to vote: one line for men, another for women. There is not a single motor vehicle in sight, and just a handful of scrawny horses with tooled leather saddles tethered to the trees. Most of these voters have walked in from the hills. Some arrived at 3 a.m. Others began walking last evening, slept by the roadside, and resumed their pilgrimage at daylight. The crowd is cheerful and individuals are willing to talk, mostly about their desire for peace. But no one wants to talk about the candidates or speculate about the outcome of the election, much less disclose how they are going to vote. I am beginning to understand why the pre-election polls are wildly inconsistent.

Inside the schoolhouse it is slow going. The poll opened at 7 a.m., and in two-and-a-half hours only twenty-four voters have completed the process and deposited their huge paper ballots, embellished with the multicolor symbols of the parties to assist the unlettered. As an accredited observer, I have a tally sheet with a dozen suggested questions to detect irregular-

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ities. As a politician I know that the best way to find out what is really happening is to talk with the *fiscales* from the opposition. I beckon the UNO *fiscal* over to a corner and ask him to give me some examples of Sandinista intimidation and harassment. He replies simply, "*Todo va bien. No hay ningún irregularidades.*"

On the way out of Zapote we hear a rumor of problems in San Ramon. Twenty minutes later we have found the village. Outside the polling place someone has parked a dilapidated Russian tractor with a faded poster of Che Guevara pasted on the side. Inside all is calm and the UNO *fiscales* have no complaints; in fact, they seem friendly and almost nonchalant in conversing with their Sandinista adversaries. It is a scene that we will see repeated throughout the day: Nicaraguans, warweary and destitute, sons dead and families divided, have called an emotional truce and taken sanctuary in one last civic ritual, groping for salvation, uncertain what will come after this day.

Election night in Managua. The city is deserted, but by 9 p.m. the political grapevine is humming with evidence that an UNO upset is in the making. The Sandinista radio suddenly switches from commentary to uninterrupted music. At Sandinista headquarters, the television lights are going out and reporters are leaving, except for the Europeans, who are still hoping for a turnaround. Off in a corner, Bianca Jagger and a dozen campaign workers are clustered around a Sandinista veteran in a wheelchair, fists clenched, singing a revolutionary favorite, "No Pasaran."

The Supreme Electoral Council has promised to release early returns by 10 p.m., but there are no announcements because the nine-member Directorate is meeting to decide whether to go the route of Chile (reluctant capitulation) or of Panama (cancel the election). Two hours pass, and at UNO headquarters in the Bambano Restaurant, a restless crowd is circulating rumors of trouble. But it won't happen, not with 3,000 international observers around. This is the most observed election in history; the U.N. and OAS teams, the Carter team, and several press groups already have random sample "rapid counts." And Ortega is no Noriega.

Just before midnight Ortega places a phone call asking to meet with Jimmy Carter. Daniel Ortega, protégé of Fidel Castro, the upstart Communist whose presence right in our back yard helped defeat Carter and elect Reagan, is now ready to concede, and he is turning to Carter for help and mediation with UNO. The vanquished meeting the vanquished.

At 6:30 a.m. Ortega, with most of the Directorate at his side, faced the press. The Revolution had promised democracy and pluralism, he said, and now he was delivering. He cautioned his followers against violence. They sang the national anthem. For the first time in history a Communist leader who had seized power by force was relinquishing it, peacefully and more or less voluntarily, to the opposition.

Tomás Borge, a founding father of Sandinismo, in and out of jails for twenty years, intransigent Communist ideologue, was nowhere to be seen. He had always warned Ortega against compromise and urged more repression. Remarkably, for ten years the Sandinista Directorate held together, seesawing between Borge and Ortega, privately divided but always unanimous in public. Gradually Ortega, young, unencumbered by Marxist academic dogma, and street smart, outgrew and outmaneuvered Borge. When he first committed himself to hold an election, it seemed a low-risk strategy to shut off contra aid and end Nicaragua's international isolation. Then, as the opposition parties came to life, the Directorate had second thoughts and at many points Ortega might have found a pretext a call it all off. But each time Carter was there, indefatigably mediating and pushing the Sandinistas, who knew that Carter had the power to denounce them and thereby push Nicaragua even deeper into world isolation. Ortega in turn went behind closed doors with the Directorate, emerging each time with just enough concessions to hold the process together.

At some indefinable point, the people of Nicaragua began to take heart and believe that their vote might really be secret and fairly counted. Maybe it was the news from Poland and Czechoslovakia and Hungary, or the ubiquitous teams of U.N. and OAS officials in the countryside for months on end, or the highly publicized assurances of Carter during his repeated visits. It probably reached critical mass during the October registration process, when Nicaraguans went to register in the presence of international observers, free from intimidation. After that point, just as in Eastern Europe, all the Sandinista propaganda advantages could have little effect.

On election day the Chamorro family newspaper *La Prensa* hit the streets with a full-page picture of Cardinal Obando y Bravo blessing the future president. She will need that blessing and more, for Violeta Chamorro will take office with a divided political coalition that will begin to splinter once again, a quirky and independent vice president-elect, and economic chaos. She is a potent symbol but a political neophyte; she won not so much because Nicaraguans want her as because they wanted the Sandinistas out. Thousands of unemployed contras will be coming home and tens of thousands of Sandinista soldiers will be demobilized and unemployed. Borge and his hardliners will spend their two remaining months in power scheming to seize legal control of the army, just as General Pinochet has managed to do in Chile. And now that the Soviet technicians, Bulgarian planners, and East German security police are heading home to learn about democracy in their own countries, an American Congress that spent billions to arm the contras may prove less than eager to pay the price of victory.

Ironically, Chamorro's chances for success will depend in large measure upon Ortega, the dictator turned democrat. As the campaign progressed, Ortega, stumping the country as presidential candidate, transformed himself from one of nine leaders into the embodiment

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of Sandinismo. And in summoning the courage to capitulate, he now has a chance to transform the Sandinistas into a loyal opposition. He is forty-three years old. If he continues his political metamorphosis, he could one day become the first Marxist leader to be turned out of—and then freely returned to—office.

BRUCE BABBITT, a former governor of Arizona, was a member of the group of election observers organized by former President Carter.

America's favorite African despot.

DOE OUR DEAR

By Bill Berkeley

President Samuel K. Doe of Liberia, the United States' closest ally in West Africa, is battling what appears to be the strongest challenge yet to his erratic regime: an insurgency in the remote border region of Nimba County. Accounts of the Liberian army's "scorched earth" campaign describe indiscriminate killings, beheadings, and dismemberment, and villages looted, bombed, and burned to the ground. Hundreds of civilians are reported to have been killed. More than 120,000 refugees have scattered across the border into neighboring countries.

The grim reports from Nimba County should have come as no surprise. Bloody conflagrations have blighted this small, impoverished country periodically since April 1980, when Samuel Doe, then an illiterate twenty-eight-year-old master sergeant, violently toppled an eccentric oligarchy descended from freed American slaves.

In late January, as reports of army abuses mounted, the United States announced that it had sent two military officers to Nimba County, at President Doe's request, to "advise" Liberian military commanders on "matters pertaining to discipline." Liberians could be forgiven for scorning action of this kind. The seeds of the current fighting were sown long ago, and the United States, many Liberians believe, has been at least indirectly responsible from the outset.

The United States is Liberia's largest investor and trading partner, and more than 5,000 Americans live and work in the country. It is the only nation in West Africa where the United States has landing and refueling rights for military planes on twenty-four-hour notice. The Voice of America broadcasts to West Africa through its transmitter outside Monrovia, the capital. Much of U.S. intelligence for West Africa passes through the American Embassy in Monrovia. Firestone operates the world's largest rubber plantation there.

In the early 1980s the Reagan administration contributed nearly $500 million to Sergeant Doe's then-fledgling regime, making Liberia the largest per capita recipient of U.S. aid in sub-Saharan Africa. The aid was part of an "implicit bargain," an administration official explained at the time, "that the military would let go [of power] if its needs were looked after." But the military did not let go. An election in 1985 was characterized by widespread intimidation, bannings, the detention of leading opposition figures, press closures, and flagrant vote-counting irregularities. Doe's election was judged to have been fraudulent by virtually all independent observers, including both Houses of the U.S. Congress, which cut off aid to Liberia. The Reagan administration, acknowledging "shortcomings" in the election, did not press for a resumption of aid. But reluctant to undermine a reliable ally, it emphasized "positive aspects" in the campaign and concluded that President Doe "seems to have the authority to govern."

Meanwhile, an unintended consequence of all that U.S. aid, including millions in direct military grants, was the arming of Doe's own minority tribe, the Krahn, which had gradually assumed control of the Liberian armed forces. Since then Krahn soldiers, particularly those from Doe's own clan, have been able to terrorize other tribes in Liberia.

On November 12, 1985, less than a month after the discredited election, a coup attempt nearly toppled Doe's regime. The coup was led by a one-time compatriot of Doe named Thomas Quiwonkpa, a former commanding general then living in exile. Quiwonkpa was from the Gio tribe in Nimba County. After the coup failed, Doe's mostly Krahn soldiers went on a rampage of vicious reprisals against Gios and the linguistically related Manos. Eyewitness accounts of these killings disclosed blood-curdling brutality. Quiwonkpa himself was captured, beaten to death, castrated, and dismembered. A leading television broadcaster, Charles Gbenyon, was stripped naked in public and later bayoneted to death while in custody of Doe's personal militia, the exclusively Krahn Executive Mansion Guard.

Doe never acknowledged these abuses. There was no official investigation, and no soldier was ever disciplined or prosecuted. Virtually all of Doe's top commanders at the time remain in comparable positions today. One of the most infamous Krahn commanders, Charles Julu, who was accused of ordering widespread summary killings, arrests, and punitive floggings in Nimba County, was later promoted to head the Executive Mansion Guard.

Nevertheless, the United States continued to back Doe. The Reagan administration never publicly pressed for an investigation. As Liberia settled into an uneasy calm, senior U.S. officials expressed confidence that the situation was stabilizing. In January 1987 Secretary of State George Shultz praised Doe's government for what he called "progress in human rights." Later Chester Crocker, then assistant secretary of state for African

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affairs, said, "We believe there has been movement in a positive direction. If you take a moving picture, it shows a trend which we think is a good one. If you take a snapshot, then in that snapshot you can see problems. Problems are not absent, but the situation has improved." The Bush administration, though maintaining a lower profile, has made no clear departure from this assessment.

Crocker's motion-picture analysis misconstrues the pattern of human rights problems in Liberia. It was never one of ongoing systematic abuses, but of episodic storms followed by lulls. The U.S. perception of "movement in a positive direction" was markedly at odds with the assessment of many Liberians. Ever since November 1985 Liberians across a broad spectrum had been predicting another round of bloodshed. The failed coup and its aftermath inflamed ethnic tensions that had been evident for several years. Nimba County, in particular, was rife with talk of revenge against the Krahn.

When I was in Nimba in early 1986, shortly after the coup attempt, a Gio businessman who had been detained and flogged by Krahn soldiers suggested that Doe and his Krahn compatriots had a strong personal incentive to preserve their rule, by whatever means. "They are afraid they will be made to pay for their wrongdoing," he said. "They are right. It's going to be a cycle of recriminations. Because people all over want revenge." Many Krahn, in turn, have lived in fear of the day when Doe is finally removed from power. A Krahn farmer in Doe's home county, Grand Gedeh, told me: "There will have to be revenge. We know that something is in the making. When that thing explodes, then God have mercy on all of us."

The events of the last month indicate "that thing" is indeed coming to pass. What began in Nimba County in late December as a limited rebellion with no explicit ethnic caste quickly degenerated into a series of vicious reprisals, spilling over into Grand Gedeh. Many of the refugees now streaming across the border into the Ivory Coast are Krahn. They have told harrowing tales of Gio rebels wreaking bloody havoc against Krahn civilians with machetes and small arms.

Most of the rebels reportedly have been drawn from a pool of former Gio and Mano soldiers who fled Liberia after earlier violent upheavals, including the 1985 attempted coup. Nimba County is mostly Gio and Mano, and was thus ripe territory for an insurrection. Some Nimba villagers reportedly have joined the rebels; others have sought to defend themselves against the advancing Krahn soldiers. The soldiers, unable, or perhaps disinclined, to distinguish Gio rebels from Gio civilians, reportedly have sprayed entire villages with .50-caliber machine guns, bombarded homes with mortars, set them on fire, butchered presumed rebel supporters with their bayonets, driving terrorized residents into the bush and across the border. Liberian reporters returning from Nimba have described villages in ruins, abandoned, reeking with the stench of mutilated bodies.

In Monrovia soldiers reportedly have gone door to door in predominantly Gio and Mano neighborhoods ransacking homes and hauling entire families to the Executive Mansion for questioning. Dozens of young Gio and Mano men reportedly have been rounded up and not heard from since. A prominent opposition figure and businessman, Robert Phillips, who was tried unsuccessfully for treason in connection with the 1985 coup attempt, was found beheaded in his home in Monrovia.

The rebel leader, Charles Taylor, is descended from the old "Americo-Liberians" who dominated the country before Doe's 1980 coup, and briefly served in Doe's government before fleeing in the face of embezzlement charges. Taylor has no obvious basis for popular support or legitimacy and is leading an insurgency that seems as brutal as the government he seeks to overthrow.

Nevertheless, his rebellion appears to have gained wide sympathy. "Liberians generally feel that even if Satan came to replace Doe, he would be like an angel in their eyes," said an opposition figure now living in exile in the United States. In radio interviews Taylor has made what many Liberians see as a naked appeal to ethnic animosities, declaring his effort "a continuation" of the famous failed coup of November 12, 1985.

In this volatile situation, there is suspicion among many Liberians that the U.S. military advisers in Nimba County, rather than offering advice on proper "discipline," are really advising the Liberian army on how to crush the rebellion. This may or may not be true. U.S. officials and diplomats, though privately conceding their distaste for Doe and his henchmen, bemoan the absence of immediate alternatives. Taylor and his rebels, to be sure, already have plenty of innocent blood on their hands, and they are reported to have Libyan connections. They are hardly a good bet to restore tranquillity or enhance U.S. interests.

Yet the assignment of U.S. military personnel in Nimba County, even assuming the best intentions, risks U.S. complicity in the Liberian army's brutality—at least in the eyes of the Liberian people. The United States would have more credibility among Liberians if it publicly insisted on a full official investigation of the abuses that have already occurred, with accountability for those responsible. If the current rebellion is eventually put down, the Bush administration could also make clear that another fraudulent election will not be papered over by the United States as the last one was. (Doe's current six-year term runs out in 1991.) Above all, the United States should put to rest the illusion of "movement in a positive direction" under Doe. The fighting in Nimba County reveals that a decade of "quiet diplomacy" has left Doe's regime as brutal as ever and inherently unstable. It invites just the kind of violent challenge that has now come to pass.

BILL BERKELEY is the author of *Liberia: A Promise Betrayed* (Lawyers Committee for Human Rights).

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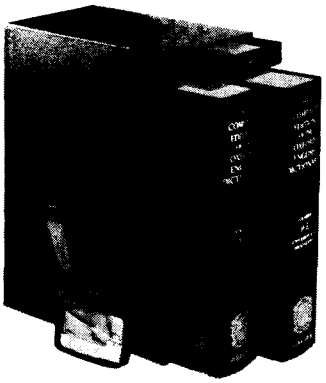

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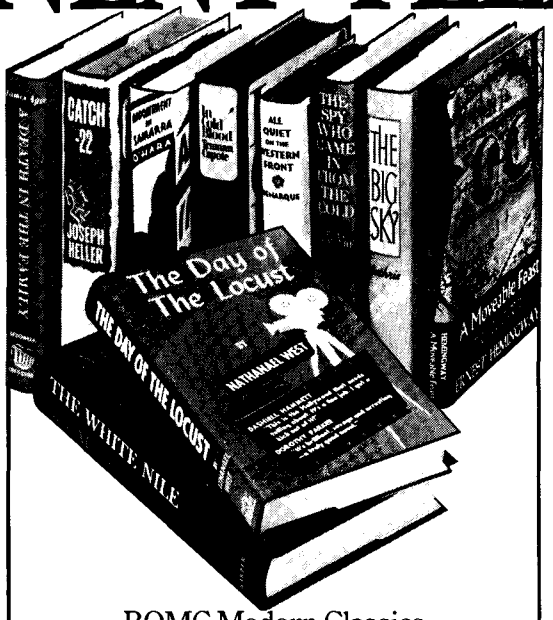

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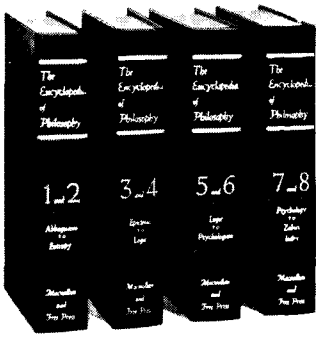

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QUID PRO WHOA

By Michael Waldman

It was late 1988, and the worm-probe industry was up in arms. Worm probes, which resemble straightened-out wire coat hangers, are thrust into the ground by earthworm breeders; a jolt of electricity sends the creatures wriggling to the surface for harvest. Unfortunately, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, worm probes led to the electrocution of at least twenty-eight people; the agency was trying to remove the product from the shelves. But that might put the manufacturer of Worm Gett'rs, located in Caldwell, Idaho, out of business. So Republican Senators Steve Symms and James McClure of Idaho quietly blocked reauthorization of the CPSC, which had lacked a full legal mandate for nearly a decade. Consumer groups struggled to break the worm-probe filibuster, but to no avail. The legislation died, the agency remained crippled, and Worm Gett'rs stayed on the market.

As the saga of these hayseed Charles Keatings indicates, dubious constituent service is a problem not confined to the S&L and HUD scandals. Nonetheless, the senators now in the dock for their activities in these debacles have innocently protested that they are merely giving the voters what they want. Al D'Amato, for example, explains his involvement in the HUD morass by declaring, "I'm not going to stop fighting for the people of this state." Senator John McCain of Arizona compares his efforts on behalf of Lincoln S&L to his routine assistance for an elderly constituent who needs help in prying loose a Social Security check from the bureaucracy.

Senator Don Riegle of Michigan is blunter still. His intervention for Keating, Riegle asserts, was no different from his routine help for other powerful corporations. In a bitter eight-page letter to the *Detroit Free Press*, Riegle compared the Lincoln case to "a particularly celebrated local case with some very interesting similarities." In sarcastic detail, he recounted Michigan lawmakers' efforts to secure antitrust clearance for a joint operating agreement between the *Free Press* and the rival *Detroit News*. (Riegle added that he met with regulators from the Federal Home Loan Bank Board not to help "constituent" Keating, but merely to "provid[e] Banking Committee perspective and insight.")

Of the thousands of favors done each year by members of Congress, the vast majority are legitimate. Like metal filings to a magnet, congressional offices inevitably attract pleas for help. We want our representative to pummel the bureaucracy on our behalf for a veterans check, disability benefit, small business loan. But some requests clearly cross the line, elevating the interests of constituents—or worse, contributors—over the public weal. With more than 100,000 people working directly or indirectly for business lobbies in Washington, D.C., pressures can grow intense.

What's a senator of average intelligence, ethics, and backbone to do? "The system is wrong, it's bad, it's corrupting," says William Proxmire, former chairman of the Senate Banking Committee. "But there's nothing developed to help. I feel sympathetic for [John] Glenn and those fellows—there is so little in the way of guidance."

Most attention has rightly focused on campaign finance laws. But Congress also desperately needs some new, explicit rules to help distinguish appropriate intervention from sleazy shilling. Here are a few:

Don't handcuff the cops. Members of Congress should not interfere with ongoing individual criminal investigations or prosecutions. Sounds obvious, but recall that at least two of Keating's supporters continued their advocacy after being informed by regulators in 1987 that a criminal referral would be made to the Justice Department. As late as two years later Arizona's Dennis DeConcini and California's Alan Cranston urgently phoned regulators in an effort to block the seizure of the S&L (see "Cranston Wiggling," page 24). And D'Amato phoned Rudolph Giuliani to ask the U.S. Attorney to review sentences for two mobsters, according to *The Village Voice* and *New York Daily News*.

Is that a regulator in your pocket, or are you just glad to see me? "What the Keating Five did different was the scale," argues Harvard political scientist Morris Fiorina. "Other than that, they did what other members of Congress do all the time, and have been doing for 200 years."

Well, yes and no. Every day lawmakers carry water for big contributors, through tax loopholes, trade provisions, and liability limitations. But when Keating's allies summoned regulators to the two now notorious meetings on Capitol Hill in April 1987, the goal was to get an

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independent agency to back off from an ongoing enforcement proceeding. That's not only wrong; more unusual for Washington, it's rare. At the first meeting, Edwin Gray has testified under oath, DeConcini offered him a deal on behalf of Keating. A week later they met again, this time with regulators from San Francisco who were conducting the Lincoln examination. Many of the senators' assertions were couched as questions, but the message was unmistakable. Gray and other former regulators who served in the Carter and Reagan administrations say they can't remember anything like it.

"Once a regulatory body is established as an independent body, it is as wrong to lean on them as it is a judge," argues Proxmire. "Even if there are no campaign contributions whatsoever, if a legislator has influence because he's a chairman of a committee or because he's an influential member of a committee, he shouldn't be putting pressure on an independent or semi-independent agency on behalf of a constituent." Former Arizona Governor Bruce Babbitt, who turned down a Keating request to lobby for Lincoln, agrees. "Where an administrative proceeding is in the nature of a law enforcement proceeding, as most of these bank procedures are, then I believe it is improper to intervene," he said. Even most politicians doing favors for their donors understand this unwritten rule.

This standard too involves nuances. On-the-record comments by members of Congress in an agency rule-making—as opposed to enforcement—proceeding can enhance policy-making. And any standard should encourage legitimate congressional oversight—such as when a senator, in the course of a public hearing, urges vigorous enforcement of the law. But the opportunity for inappropriate congressional special pleading increases the more an agency action focuses on a specific company or person.

"Nice little agency you have there. Pity if something should happen to it." "You can't control the problem by saying, 'Congressman, you can't call an agency about a grant for your district,' " notes Babbitt. "The question is at what point does it become extortionate." Wherever that point is, there you will find Al D'Amato. New York's junior senator stands out not because his was the only congressional name on the HUD phone logs, but because of the relentlessness of his quids and quos. In case after case, D'Amato demanded HUD funds for projects built by developers who had contributed to his campaigns, or who had retained as counsel the senator's brother, Armand. HUD officials, mostly hand-picked patronage employees, readily complied; if not, D'Amato hounded the agency until it did. (One top regional official had a speed-dial button on his phone that enabled him to contact his mentor quickly.) In essence, D'Amato operated the New York region of HUD as a classic protection racket: first, monopolize the supply (through control of the agency); then extract your monopolist's fee.

The granny exemption. Broadest latitude should be given to routine help for average citizens. Former FTC chair Michael Pertschuck suggests a sort of means test: "The rule really should be the less money you have, the more help you get." There is less argument for discretion when it comes to an entitlement such as Medicare than when deciding whether to seize a bank or ban a pesticide.

Indeed, if ever there was a case of the people getting what they wanted, this would seem to be it. Given a choice between James Madison and Jacoby & Meyers, most voters would probably choose the caseworker. The problem is not any ethical taint associated with such help, but rather too much of a good thing. Senator William Cohen, who in 1982 co-authored *Getting the Most Out of Washington: Using Congress to Move the Federal Bureaucracy*, estimated that "as much as forty percent of staff time is spent in casework." Congress could rescue itself from the drudgery of endless paper shuffling if it heeded former Representative Henry Reuss, who proposed that an ombudsman's office be set up to discern trends of abuse by executive agencies, which would in theory eliminate the worst problems.

When bringing home the pork, keep it kosher. Standards are inevitably murkier when it comes to everyday contract hustling and grantsmanship. Still, some rules, if followed, could purify the process. Consider a congressman who is asked by a developer to help win a HUD grant for a hometown project. At a bare minimum, the lawmaker should conduct an independent investigation, even a cursory one, to see if the constituent's claims are valid or self-serving. "You can usually find out with just one phone call what's going on," said one Democratic administrative assistant. "And that will often be to the agency itself, so it accomplishes the mission of letting them know you're watching." And most intervention should be limited to inquiring about the status of a proceeding, rather than thumping for a result.

More important would be a requirement that lawmakers do all their advocacy for private citizens in public. Members of Congress, like other citizens, are not supposed to make secret contracts with regulators during a formal proceeding. Executive branch officials in many agencies are required to log any contacts they have with the public; Congress should be subject to the same standard. Quietly sleazy help for financial contributors, not workaday assistance for veterans, would potentially embarrass members of Congress under a full disclosure system.

When in doubt, do the right thing. Finally, solons should refrain from pushing for the district's interests if they differ from those of the country. Today, too many lawmakers see their job as being similar to that of a lawyer—represent the client, no matter what the cost. Civics-text earnestness of this sort might be no match for hard political reality, but DeConcini's defense of his actions in the Keating case illustrates why it is needed. "Did we do anything wrong by interceding? That's what I do for you, ladies and gentlemen," he told an Arizona audience recently. "That's my job." He pointed proudly to another recent intervention: when the Department of Defense wanted to buy sixty Apache helicopters, manufactured in Arizona, DeConcini and other legislators met with Secretary Dick Cheney and forced the agency

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to buy more. Maybe this was good for some residents of Arizona (though that state's citizens pay taxes, too), but it's a lousy way to construct coherent budget policy—and the main reason that dovish Democrats are as great an obstacle to arms reductions as the administration.

Some guidance may come from the ongoing Ethics Committee investigations of fully six percent of the Senate this spring. In themselves, these probes are extraordinary, coming from a committee so drenched in old-boy bonhomie that it didn't act against ABSCAMmer Harrison Williams until after his felony conviction.

But Senate ethics rules governing favors for constituents and contributors are maddeningly vague. The rules' closest brush with specificity is an admonition that senators not receive compensation or benefit from any source "by virtue of influence improperly exerted from his position as a Member." House rules are more precise, although the Ethics Committee read them very broadly in ruling on Jim Wright.

Quirky specificity may snare some senators; for example, the rules most explicitly restrict actions that personally benefit the lawmaker or his family. Thus, D'Amato's actions benefiting his brother might receive special scrutiny, or McCain's family's investments with Keating (even though he appears less culpable than others involved). These fortuities aside, committee members may lack the political resolve to find that contributor service violates the norms of the Senate. One consequence of the Ethics Committee probe could be a legislative desire for more explicit standards.

Ultimately, even these rule changes will fail if not preceded by campaign finance reform. Without a comprehensive campaign overhaul, lawmakers will continue to be hard-pressed even to distinguish between contrib-

Cranston Wiggling

Alan Cranston's role in the Lincoln Savings and Loan scandal is a little murky. Even the senator himself can't seem to sort out what he did and didn't do. In the nine months since news of the scandal broke, Cranston has refashioned his story four times.

On April 2, 1987, Senators John McCain, John Glenn, and Cranston gathered in Dennis DeConcini's office for what has become an infamous meeting with federal bank board chief Edwin Gray. Since 1986 bank examiners had been auditing Charles Keating's Lincoln Savings and Loan. Regulators suspected that Lincoln was in bad shape and were considering seizing the thrift. At Keating's request, the senators—all of whom had received generous campaign and other contributions from him—sat down with Gray to discuss the audit. After the meeting, the Federal Home Loan Bank Board held off another two years before taking over Lincoln last April. In that time Keating not only bankrupted Lincoln, but convinced thousands of unsuspecting elderly people to invest their savings in high-risk bonds that eventually went bust.

At a press conference last summer, soon after news of the meeting broke, Cranston got his first taste of the questions that would dog him for months. He wanted to talk about child care and housing. Instead, he was swamped with questions about what he'd said to Gray at the 1987 meeting. "What I said is: make a decision, regulators, on whether this [audit] is an operation that should continue, or if it is not, stop it," Cranston told reporters. "If laws have been broken, prosecute. If [Lincoln is] getting deeper and deeper into a hole, stop it before it costs more to the federal government and there are more depositors who are losing. That's all we said at that meeting, move, just stop this malicious delay that's been going on for over two years." In other words, all he told Gray was, put up or shut up. Cranston went on to say that as a senator he had helped hundreds of thousands of constituents, and that the $47,000 in campaign contributions and $850,000 for voter registration drives he received from Keating had no influence on his actions.

Figuring interest in the scandal would fizzle if he had nothing new to say, Cranston put his "twenty-one-year spotless record" on his sleeve and recycled the story for reporters from *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, and *Los Angeles Times*. He added that though he hadn't done anything wrong, in retrospect he wouldn't have met with Gray if he could have foreseen the "misinterpretation it leads to."

It didn't work. By late fall Cranston's popularity fell off a cliff. Polls showed that more than half of California voters wouldn't vote for him again. More than a quarter didn't even want him to finish his term. Straight talk hadn't diffused interest in him, so he switched to a more subtle tactic: silence. For nearly a month Cranston refused to answer questions about anything thrift-related. But during that time scrutiny of the scandal only intensified. Common Cause continued to pressure for an Ethics Committee investigation of the Keating Five. Shirley Lampel, an elderly widow who lost her life savings when Lincoln went under, wept before a congressional committee. And Gray testified under oath that at the meeting the senators offered him a deal if he would kill the regulation of Lincoln's riskier investments.

Gray also testified that at the meeting Cranston "only asked some questions about the duration of the examination." Suddenly that's all Cranston could remember saying, too. He ditched his previous story, broke his silence, and began to peddle this newer, less damaging version of the meeting. Poised as the beleaguered underdog, Cranston said he was going to fight for his reputation, but that he wasn't going to point a finger of blame at anyone else.

One month later Cranston started pointing—at Gray. The senator's new story hadn't improved his credibility, and his cause hadn't been helped by Gray's appearance on "60 Minutes" and "This Week with David Brinkley," among other shows, in which he repeated his charge that the senators pressured him to go easy on Lincoln. Cranston was furious. "Ed Gray . . . says wild, politically motivated things about me when he is not under oath," he wrote in a December letter to Don Hewitt, executive producer of "60 Minutes." By January Cranston had tossed the weeping widow entirely into Gray's lap. At a January 18 press conference he not only held Gray accountable for Lincoln's collapse, but

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utors and constituents. After all, right now a majority of House members received more than half of their campaign funds from political action committees, which are almost by definition the tools of Washington lobbyists. Some members—such as Al Swift, chairman of the very subcommittee that has jurisdiction over campaign reform—garner as much as seventy-five percent of their funds from these PACs. So routine is the intermingling of favor-dispensing and fund-raising that Senator Rudy Boschwitz provided contributors with special stamps to affix to letters sent to his office.

In contrast, examples of congressional self-restraint are rare—and are more rarely rewarded. Babbitt was chided by *The Arizona Republic* for being "fastidious" when his views were publicized there. Representative Mike Synar, a fifth-term Democrat from Oklahoma who declines all PAC money, also refuses to seek grants for his district, in particular refusing to sign on to letters signed by his colleagues in the state delegation. In light of his colleagues' conduct, Synar's reticence has raised eyebrows at home. "There are a lot of members in my Oklahoma delegation who wonder why I don't do this. There's been lots of conversations," he said. "It has hurt me. But I'll tell you what—it's given me an independence that I enjoy. We help a lot of people here, but only to make sure they're treated fairly. That's a lot different from going in there and trying to guarantee a result."

Only scandals produce seismic changes in congressional rules, if not mores. We may be at that point now. Let's hope so. Otherwise, the dominant ethos will continue to be that of the senator's aide who referred to a favored firm as her boss's "client." Client? "Client, constituent," she told startled consumer lobbyists. "It's the same thing in this context, right?" •

launched into a bizarre ad hominem attack, calling him a "publicity hungry political hack" who "lies over and over in the Hitlerian technique of the Big Lie." (The part about Hitler was noticeably absent in the press statement Cranston's office released.)

Despite his flip-flops, Cranston insists his story has been the same from the beginning. In a recent interview I reminded him of his previous statements, some of which I'd gleaned from tapes and transcripts his staff had given me. He pulled a George Bush: "No, I never said I said that at the meeting." Responding to a question about his reasons for attending the meeting, he replied: "If you're a senator, and somebody who lives in another state but has acquired a big business in your state comes to you and says that he thinks he's in good shape but that he's being hassled by some regulators who don't seem to understand his business and he's afraid if this audit, if it goes on forever, is going to do very severe damage to his business, and the guy employs 800 people in your state and has over 100,000 depositors . . . and Alan Greenspan, now the head of the Fed, tells you that he's solvent for the foreseeable future, and Arthur Young's accounting agency, one of the Big Eight, tells you that he's not only solvent but that he is indeed being harassed by the regulators and that this audit has gone on longer than any audit in history, what would you do? That's my question. . . . Ask your readers."

Before you answer, consider this: What if you also knew that the regulators were auditing Lincoln partly because they suspected Arthur Young's rosy assessment of Lincoln was unreliable and based on Keating's cooked numbers? And that Greenspan hadn't *told* you Lincoln was in good shape, you'd only seen a letter to that effect he'd written in March 1985, more than two years before? (Greenspan was incensed that Cranston used the letter in his defense. "No one ever called, saying, 'Do you still hold these views,' " he told *New York Times* reporter Nathaniel Nash. "It's almost as bad as saying, 'I just read a report written two years ago that Amalgamated Widgets is a good stock to buy.' ")

The rest of Cranston's story has an equally tenuous relationship with the truth. For example, if Keating's was a legitimate complaint from a concerned constituent, and Cranston's intervention on his behalf wasn't motivated by the cash Keating had given him, why wasn't Cranston's fellow Californian, Pete Wilson, invited to the meeting? Similarly, wouldn't a seasoned politician like Cranston find it the least bit curious that all of the senators at the meeting happened to have taken money from Keating?

Far from the passive image he likes to project, Cranston was aggressive in his efforts to get the regulators to ease off of Keating. It's unlikely that Keating, a man who proudly admitted that he sought to buy political influence, would have given Cranston $850,000 for his pet voter registration drives—after the meeting—if he felt Cranston hadn't served him well before. And he had. Even as federal regulators prepared to take control of Lincoln last spring, Cranston repeatedly called the FHLBB, pushing hard to stop it. Cranston says he thought selling Lincoln instead of taking it over would save the taxpayers money, and that when the government couldn't find a qualified buyer, he had no complaint. But he did complain, saying he was "outraged" that the thrift hadn't been sold.

Cranston says he can't remember anything the other senators said at the meeting. All he recalls is what they didn't say. "We all went in there with different agendas," he says. After I interviewed Cranston, Murray Flanders, Cranston's press secretary, pulled me aside. "Cranston is such an intensely focused man," Flanders said, "that he couldn't even hear what the other senators were saying." Unless, of course, he added emphatically, Cranston had heard something improper. If Flanders is right, then either Cranston didn't consider DeConcini's offering Gray a deal improper, or Gray lied under oath to the congressional committee. And since the crux of Cranston's most recent defense is that Gray told the truth about him under oath but lied everywhere else, this isn't a healthy stand for Cranston to take.

Cranston refuses to testify under oath himself until after the Ethics Committee issues its report, which could take months. That will give him plenty of time to work out the kinks in his story a few more times, until he finds a version of the truth he's really comfortable with.

WESTON KOSOVA

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Future Tense

The future has a long past. For centuries, writers of fiction and plays have shaped the future in various ways, and they've been joined in this century by screenwriters. Almost always the future has been used to say something about the present, and occasionally it's memorable. If the work has inner consistency and vivifying imagination, it can often chill us, as we note how near and nearly inevitable a particular future seems.

No chill in the film made from Margaret Atwood's novel **The Handmaid's Tale** (Cinecom), because the consistency is thin and the imagination isn't vivid, even though the screenplay is by Harold Pinter. The setting is "the recent future" in a new state on this continent, a highly militarized state (besieged by rebels) in which machoism, racism, homophobia, and religious fundamentalism prevail. Those elements are certainly apparent enough today, and possibly they could wax, but the Atwood-Pinter treatment of them is simultaneously mechanical and facile. Instead of being frightened by possibility, we almost nod in recognition as one scare topic after another is exploited somewhat smugly.

Issues like the ones in this film—issues of any kind—haven't much concerned Pinter in his career. Mostly he has devoted himself to playwriting of unique and exquisite surreality, with a vision that pierces the diurnal to disclose its mysteries. In a few recent short plays—generally overrated, as if to congratulate Pinter for giving up all that nebulous stuff and getting down to issues—he has dealt with political oppression. Perhaps it was as a reward for coming to his social senses that he was asked to do this screenplay. In any case, it is by far his worst.

All his screenplays have been adaptations, of his own plays or of other people's novels, and they range in quality from the plain workmanship of *The Quiller Memorandum* to the genius of *The Proust Screenplay*. It's certainly conceivable that he might have improved *The Handmaid's Tale* with a fiery plunge into its essentials that realized its themes, mended its meanderings, and raised it out of sexy futurist soap opera. Instead, almost lazily, Pinter has merely trailed after Atwood, and produced garish science fiction.

Ryuichi Sakamoto's music starts us off with lots of lower-colon rumblings. We open in a snowy landscape as a young couple and their small child are trying to cross a border. Lights flash on, and an amplified voice warns them to stop. Dad, for no sane reason, ventures out alone and is gunned down. (Well, there is a reason: the script needs to get rid of him.) Then Mom, Natasha Richardson, rushes to him and is captured by troops. They drag her off and abandon the child. (Retrospectively this seems strange because the new regime is avid for children. However, it does provide chances, during the first hour, for the film to cut away from Richardson's adventures to the child wandering in the snow and calling "Mommy.")

We are introduced to the new regime—immense barracks, stockyard handling of human beings, many soldiers, many stern female guards armed with electric prods. Young white fertile women are isolated as brood mares; they are called handmaids and are all dressed identically in red. (Women in every group—wives, maids, etc.—are all dressed in one color.) Richardson, who forgets her dead husband and abandoned child unless the script reminds her of them from time to time, is assigned to the home of the Commander, Robert Duvall, because his wife, Faye Dunaway, is sterile. Dunaway is delighted that Richardson is going to bear Duvall's child; the state's ritual demands that the wife be present at the impregnation attempts.

I interrupt this synopsis, which may make the film sound less ridiculous than it is, to note that Igor Luther, the cinematographer who did so well for Wajda's *Danton*, shoots everything in tones that are exceptionally precise, almost inhumanly exact, which is just right for the film. Luther's work is the film's best asset. But it can't redeem the whole, which seems like a more expensive and sophisticated spin-off from Saturday afternoon sci-fi serials.

One reason that all these characters, rulers and underlings, seem phony is that they are always being hustled through prisms of emotion. Especially Richardson. Anger, fear, longing, despair, whatever—they swish by like the spotlights that keep sweeping around at night. Nothing can really register because everything seems under the gun—not of the police but of the director.

He is Volker Schlöndorff, the German who worked his *gedämpfte* wiles on *The Tin Drum* and *Swann in Love*.

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Cinema Paradiso. *A Sicilian town—its warmth, fantasies, loves, and frustrations encapsulated in a film theater. The protagonist is a screen-struck boy who becomes a screen-struck man. Very pleasant. (Reviewed 2/19/90)* **Flashback.** *A patchwork plot doesn't much impede this comedy about a straight-laced young FBI agent and the wild '60s radical he is taking to jail. Adventures en route. Also some sharp digs at latter-day complacencies. (2/19/90)* **Glory.** *Edward Zwick shows unexpected strength as director in this unusually stirring account of a black regiment that fought under a white colonel in the Union Army. Except for Matthew Broderick as the colonel, this historical re-creation is fine. (1/8&15/90)* **Mama, There's a Man in Your Bed.** *Title notwithstanding, this French comedy about a Parisian CEO and the black woman who cleans his office is a quality bonbon. (3/5/90)* **—SK**

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(Schlöndorff is now Schlondorff; traveling westward he has dropped his umlaut.) True, he has some sense of pace and space: nothing is languorous or remote. But he has no sense of the ridiculous. He doesn't know when an emotional encounter is so compressed that it seems funny—as are the swift series of such high-speed encounters.

Among the actors Richardson suffers most. I saw her first as Nina in a London production of *The Seagull* that starred her mother, Vanessa Redgrave, and she was adequate. Her film career has been less happy. Her last major part was the title role in *Patty Hearst*, in which she was dim. Here she seems puny—but admittedly it's a part for a marionette.

Dunaway, as the Commander's wife, does one more of her Dragon Ladies. Duvall, the Commander, shows only how an excellent actor can waste his time.

Lonely Woman Seeks Life Companion (Ifex) is an unusual Soviet film, though that adjective may soon become inappropriate. What was once thought of as the usual Soviet film may fade away. This well-turned screenplay by Viktor Merezhko is close, intimate, finely calibrated. Essentially it's a two-character picture, though other people function in the story.

Klavdia, a forty-two-year-old seamstress in Kiev, puts up notices on five telephone poles inviting the attention of single men. The first man who rings the doorbell of her small apartment is a pleasant drunk, Valentin. (She never meets another candidate.) Reluctantly she allows him to come in though she is unattracted. He turns out to be not only clever but intelligent and perceptive, and though things start rather roughly—in their first meeting he tries to rob her, and she crowns him with an ironing board—a relationship of tacit feelings, needs, recognitions develops. At the finish the future is left somewhat open-ended and nebulous for Klavdia, yet a clearer finish, happy or not, might have seemed too neat.

Viacheslav Krishtofovich, the director, has worked a good deal in TV. This may have been the perfect preparation for this first feature. Most of it is between two people, mostly the camera is in close, and he deals with these facts as opportunity, not constriction. Directing as if it were a chamber work, more reliant on nuance than on large climax, Krishtofovich brings off the film very well.

Alexander Zbruyev, as Valentin, gives a performance like a self-peeling onion, except that at the center there is a complex man. Irina Kupchenko, as Klavdia, is an actress of dignity, humor, despair, and with the ability to fill silences with self. The four main artists—writer, director, and two principal actors—make this film a small, savory treat. •

ADVICE AND DISSENT

They're contentious and contagious. They're the McLaughlin Group. (clockwise from left) Jack Germond, Eleanor Clift, John McLaughlin, Fred Barnes, Morton Kondracke, and Pat Buchanan.
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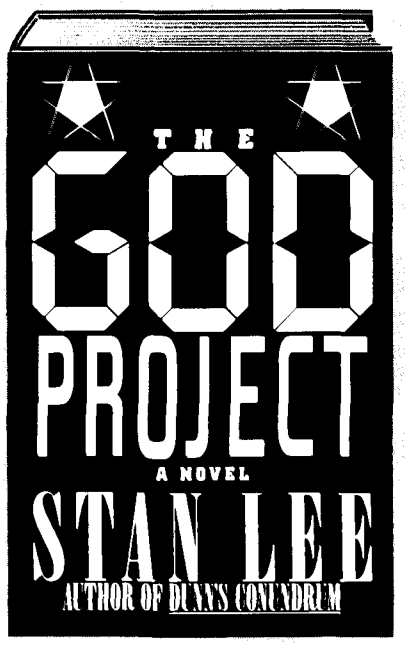

GROVE WEIDENFELD

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An orgy of Impressionism in Boston.

Monet Isn't Everything

By John Updike

One goes to a Monet exhibit curious as to what a bad Monet would look like. For Monet, like Cézanne, is an all-blue chip; together, the two are modernism's irreproachable grandfathers. Possessed of tenacity, integrity, and enough philosophy to frame and sustain radical aesthetic ambitions, they spoiled few canvases and always moved forward, continuing to the end to open up a way for the generations following. Under their hands, painting shifted from being a rendition of real objects to being a dramatic record of the act of painting, an act whose traces are brush strokes, impasto, nervous outlines, noticeable distortions of what the lens of the camera—the sudden mechanical rival that pre-empted sheer representation—would see.

Cézanne's distortions occur mostly in his drawing, the dislocated outlines and flattening of perspective; his colors merely display to us, in their sensitive overlapping transparency, the colors we feel are there. Monet, remaining conservative if sketchy in his draftsmanship, took color over the limit, into the feverish pinks, crusty golds, darting reds, smoldering mauves, and icy blues he saw in the changing light reflected from stacks of grain and the cathedral front at Rouen.

Since light and atmosphere so restlessly changed, he did not need to change the position of his easel; the sets of paintings from one chosen spot, or with minimal alteration of perspective, which he began in 1889 and continued through the 1890s into the water-lilies series of the new century, are an unprecedented exercise in picture-making quite modern in its implications, anticipating the numbered canvases of painters like Pollock and Reinhardt and making art more subjective and yet more scientific than it was before. The painter as roving reporter, in the manner of Delacroix or Turner, or as interviewer, in the form of portraitist, gives way to the painter as visual seismograph—the recorder of terrestrial effects that become, in the struggle to reduce perception to paint, private effects. Action painting exists in the whirls and daubs of Monet's increasingly abstract impressionism, but renewably, inexhaustibly, since the seen world stimulates it.

"Monet in the 90s: The Series Paintings" is an energetically assembled, logically organized show that opened at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts in February, where it will remain to the end of April, traveling on to the Art Institute of Chicago and the Royal Academy of Arts in London. It is a megashow with a purpose: the partial reassembly of the series paintings that were scattered to buyers soon after Monet painted them. He had expressed hopes to his dealer, Charles Durand-Ruel, that some sets might be kept together when sold, but they were rapidly dispersed in the 1890s' ever more lively Monet market. The series as reconstituted here consist of as few as three and as many as ten—of the Rouen cathedral—and an even dozen of the haystacks (determinedly called "grainstacks," as if the word exists in English).

Monet painted at least twenty-five grainstacks (if you insist) and thirty views of Rouen, the angle varying slightly, as well as smaller consecutive studies of a valley of the Creuse River, poppy fields, poplars, the Seine, cliffs along the Norman coast, Mount Kolsaas in Norway, and the water-lily pond, with its Japanese bridge, at his home in Giverny. Paul Tucker, a six-foot-six former all-New England tackle, now an art professor in Boston, used all his muscular powers of research and persuasion to draw over ninety of the series paintings from their hiding places on five continents over the last four years. Anxious private collectors were consoled with full-sized Polaroids of their borrowed masterpieces. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, graciously parted with a painting of rocks at Creuse; but George Bush, darn it, was prohibited by federal law from lending a *Morning on the Seine* that hangs in the White House.

The show is well set up in the sequential spaces of the Gund Gallery, with paintings hung three inches higher than customary and with larger-than-usual print on the wall labels. A playful set of plywood arches obstructs the view of the cathedral fronts, but the other viewers at this well-attended megashow are the real obstruction to giving these subtle and lovely canvases the quiet and distanced contemplation they deserve. Monet's series paintings offer to take us inside a painter's options and to anatomize, to an extent, his process; but the mobs of bobbing heads and the bumbling, zombified wearers of pedagogical headsets (I even saw a woman tied to her child with the wires of their entwined appreciation apparatus) clutter one's impression of these almost totally unpopulated portraits of nature.

In a strange way, the most impressive series are those, such as the mornings on the Seine, that vary the least. Of these nine paintings, eight, executed in 1896-97, are virtually identical in composition: the lefthand third of the nearly square canvas is taken up with foreground vegetation; the remaining two thirds are horizontally divided by the river's bosky horizon, and the water reflects a widening irregular piece of sky, creating symmetrical wings of pallor. This sky, always a morning sky, ranges in tint from soft blue, with hints of cloud and dawn's rose, through the palest of violets to a misty white. The greens of the foreground vegetation go blue with distance; when the day is foggy, they fade almost to invisibility. In the *Morning on the Seine* from a private collection in Washington, the foreground mass feels like a stage flat beyond whose edge vague mauve shapes inscrutably perform; in the painting from the Mead Art Museum in Amherst, the atmosphere is thicker yet, and a chalky fog dominates the heart of the scene.

Such variations, pursued from a fixed easel position, imply the infinite wealth of what can be observed. In no two of the series is the atmosphere the same; in all of the eight (the ninth was done in 1898, and is oddly garish) the tonal modulations of intervening moisture-laden air, each matched by a subdued reflection in the surface of the Seine, are magisterial. Without a touch of anecdote—no figure, no boat, no individualized tree—an intensely dramatic mood is created, and a palpable space that invites us deep into it. The sensation of peaceful pleasure—indeed, of triumphant harmony—induced by these bulbous blue shapes derives equally from the lofty justice of the depiction and the abstract cunning of the composition's Rorschach-test symmetry.

Another, smaller riverine series, the three *Ice Floes* of 1893-94, makes a similar effect of light-handed grandeur with means even more limited. One painting is done almost entirely in shades of

John Updike is the author most recently of *Just Looking* (Knopf), a collection of essays on art.

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purply-blue, another in green, and the third with swatches of a springtime yellow. A central island of slender saplings casts down a loose reflection overlaid by brusque horizontal strokes of white that read as ice floes. The sense of gliding motion, and of the glassy weight beneath the sketchy reflections and daubs of floating ice, anticipates the layered complexity of the water-lilies paintings, but unlike them is intelligible at a glance. The air, so often the real object of Monet's focus, feels cold enough to make us sorry for the hardy plein-air painter yet has a relenting taste, in the tinge of tree buds and the floes on breaking ice itself. And there is a qualitative effect produced by the hanging of the three slightly different views on one wall: repetition of an image, whether by Monet or Warhol, somehow changes its meaning, deepens it troublingly. Here, a sense of motion in time is evoked. The book of nature has many thin pages, which relentlessly turn; the pages are moments.

Compared with these two groups of liquid scenery, the more famous and spectacular grainstack series seem to be trying slightly too hard. There is greatness in them, certainly, but perhaps as much in the effort as in the achievement. If these are the paintings whereby Monet became a post-impressionist and his significance to modern art begins, then he paid a price, in ease and plausibility.

The Rouen facade is painted with an uncharacteristic dry, lumpy, accretionary stroke, without fluency; the lacy stone details are laboriously transformed into friable baguettes and dim ribs of color. Monet's letters from Rouen to his wife, Alice, brim with his struggle:

> What I have tackled is enormously difficult but at the same time of really great interest. . . . Each day I add and subtract something that I had not even known how to see before. What a difficulty. . . . I am broken, I can't do any more and I had a night full of bad dreams, something that has never happened to me before.

He had a nightmare that the Cathedral fell on him; it seemed "to be pink or blue or yellow."

Though the polychrome suite of facades is arresting, like a row of fancy pastries, we are perhaps too conscious of the willed violence and daring of these transformations. Not a religious man, nor a city man, Monet brought to his subject here little of the love that touches his most casual scrubbing-in of sky and vegetation. The Cathedral is dissolved not only in the shifting light and weather but in the painter's basic indifference to it as anything but a sunstruck cliff, a contoured excrescence turned doughy in his rendering.

The stacks of grain, too, seem a bit alien to Monet; certainly he avoids opportunities to define their structure and scale. A photograph survives of the grainstacks at Giverny, and the details of their careful thatching are visible; and one of them has a long ladder left leaning against it, indicating its considerable size. Monet's might be five feet tall, instead of the twenty or so they actually were; they are squat pentagonal blobs whose sole purpose is to receive light, which casts some blue shadows but does little to model their forms. Their solidity is sacrificed to the painter's own evanescent perceptions. To Gustave Geffroy he wrote in the fall of 1890:

> I'm hard at it, working stubbornly on a series of different effects (grainstacks), but at this time of year the sun sets so fast that it's impossible to keep up with it. . . . I'm getting so slow at my work it makes me despair, but the further I get, the more I see that a lot of work has to be done in order to render what I'm looking for: "instaneity," the "envelope" above all, the same light spread over everything, and more than ever I'm disgusted by easy things that come in one go. Anyway, I'm increasingly obsessed by the need to render what I experience.

Tucker, in his lengthy catalog text, makes a detailed case for the grainstacks series as part of a fin-de-siècle French reassertion—after the humiliations of the military defeat by Prussia in 1870-71, chronic government scandals, and a relative decline among nations in industry and enterprise—of rural virtue, of *la douce terre de France*. But looking at the paintings, it is hard to feel much agrarian pride or, with many of them, the "envelope" of atmosphere Monet strove to capture. The haystacks seem flat pieces of color bedaubed, sometimes, with unconvincing snow. As John Singer Sargent noticed, Monet's palette contained no black; but white he did have, and he was not above piling it on raw to represent snow, perhaps back in his studio, where he would take the canvases painted on the spot to be finished and "harmonized."

The grainstack from the Shelburne Museum is especially egregious in its gobs of white, whereas the Metropolitan Museum's shows snow on the field and none on the stacks. But very similar ingredients in the specimen from the Art Institute of Chicago miraculously succeed; looking at the canvas, one's eye does prickingly feel the atmosphere, the air intervening between eye and visible object, the invisible quality of the day and moment. And the sunset stack from the Boston Museum's own fine Monet collection is superb in its coloristic venturing—in the Turneresque pinks and

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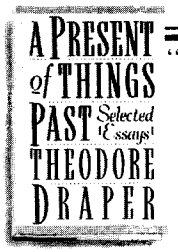

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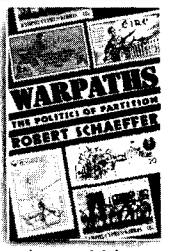

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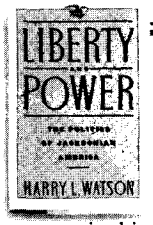

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yellows that do for a background and the furious dashes and Xs of orangy-red on the shadowy stack's lower portion, hastily indicating a visual event so subtle and yet so ignorable as to constitute revelation.

The strenuous lessons in boldness Monet gave himself with the stacks paid off in the splendid series of poplars that immediately followed. A row of poplars along a curve of the Epte River became, in the spring of 1891, so precious to Monet that, when the village of Limetz decided to auction them off for lumber, Monet attempted to intervene with the mayor and wound up buying them at auction himself, along with a local wood merchant who agreed to let the trees stand a few more months. Their slender linear forms, planted a short distance apart for straight growth, accept the light with much of the weird alchemy of the grainstacks, but, in clear silhouette against the sky, never baffle our eyes or seem effortfully strange. Wonderfully free, rather, are the purples and yellows Monet saw in the trunks, pictured generally in two rows, a near and a distant, with the distant trunks often reduced to single undulant brush strokes. The Metropolitan Museum's much-reproduced painting of four backlit trunks, as severely composed as a Barnett Newman, distills the elegance of all the series, a linear grace—learned, in part, from Japanese prints—that returns a few years later in the Spring Meadow group, the poplars and their shadows more wavy.

In the Epte series, the brush strokes fly, indicating wind in one canvas but everywhere delineating space, an air now blue-green, now violet-gray, but permeable and fresh throughout. This is France in her countryside, sung by choruses of poplars, and this is painting, as redefined by Maurice Denis, who in 1890 claimed that "a picture . . . is essentially a plane surface covered with colors assembled in a certain order." Always, in the Epte paintings, at the feet of the poplars stands the mirroring water of the river bringing into the pictures that element of liquid reflection so dear to the painter, as if it symbolized the flowing complexity of our impressions, and yet posed a duplication of them. The writer Octav Mirbeau, after seeing these paintings, wrote Monet that he wanted to hug him: "Never did any artist render anything equal to it."

The paintings of the Norman coast, done in 1896-97, are less charming and invigorating than the poplar series, though they extend freedom of color almost into recklessness. The four of the headland of the Petit Ailly flatten the terrain into murky patches devoid of depth, and suppress into formlessness the little house in the foreground of each. They have a new kind of monumentality, and approach the environmental largeness the immense water-lily studies will achieve.

Monet's Norman origins gave this landscape special meaning for him, and an elegiac undertone to his paintings here. But the three paintings of the Customs House at Varengeville satisfy our curiosity as to what a bad Monet looks like. Pastel flecks in halfhearted pointillism; a haze of wistful formlessness; an evenness of attention devoid of accent; the sickly unshadowed sweetness of Sunday paintings ever since. The necessary complement to Monet's preternatural receptivity, the stout picture-making faculty that not even an impressionist can do without, here abandoned him, perhaps in his sheer pleasure at being on this breezy headland, high above the sea.

This Normandy vista, so big in reality, seems small in the rendering; whereas those pilgrims who travel to the artist's estate at Giverny are surprised by how modest the grounds and the epic lily pond are. The artist's little pond, in the final series of this superb show, floods his canvas with shades of green, while the arc of the bridge above the reflecting water, suspended in air, presides above profusion and holds us firm above immersion. The eye welcomes its mathematical curve, abrupt as a Zen riddle, amid the wealth of fluid appearance. As Monet continued for the rest of his life to paint the water lilies, he left out the helpful bridge, and modern art, in its dominant tendencies, has done without it also. •

Measuring Evil

By Tzvetan Todorov

Modernity and the Holocaust by Zygmunt Bauman

(Cornell University Press, 224 pp., $29.95)

Yet another book on the Holocaust? I, for one, will not complain. Without going so far as to suggest that contemporary humanists be required to *write* a book on the subject, I believe all of them must confront the problems raised by the death camps. (Jean Améry, an angry survivor who later committed suicide, once said that high school students should have some books about Auschwitz on their required reading list.) It is no longer possible to speculate about humanity in general, or about the destiny of modernity, without taking into account the existence of Auschwitz (and Kolyma). It is only natural that, after the eyewitness accounts, after the historical analyses, the time would come for sociological, political, and moral reflections on the subject.

Zygmunt Bauman's book, which belongs with such recent works as George Kren and Leon Rappoport's *The Holocaust and the Crisis of Human Behavior* and Peter Haas's *Morality After Auschwitz*, purports to be nothing more or less than the transfer of Holocaust research results to the field of sociology. If this were the case, the book would hold interest only for sociologists; but it is not the case. And though it is not always agreeable reading (it is repetitive and disorganized), one cannot regret the existence of this book, which clearly cost its author a great deal.

Such reflections, it must be said, imply that we have made up our mind about one of the most controversial issues raised by the Holocaust, namely its uniqueness. As soon as one is no longer content merely to describe an event, but proposes to analyze and to explain it, one has renounced a belief in its singularity. Scholars are great banalizers.

It is true that the particular experiences of individuals are irreducible to theoretical categories, that it is inevitably wounding to these individuals to see themselves turned into examples of something more general. It is also true that a particular massacre may be judged more atrocious than all others within human memory. And yet, if we wish to learn the lessons of Auschwitz, we cannot content ourselves with repeating the descriptions of its horrors; we must also attempt to comprehend them. To affirm an event's absolute uniqueness is almost as unhelpful to comprehension as to declare its extreme banality: both attitudes discourage inquiry and discussion. This sterile alternative must, therefore, be

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abandoned. The convergence of various elements makes the death camps a unique event, but the elements themselves are far from unique. They are, indeed, quite common; and that is precisely why we must be concerned about them.

The first question one always wants to raise about these events is, obviously, what made them possible. A common impulse is to answer by using a familiar historical construct. Ever since the Renaissance, Europeans have been accustomed to singing the praises of civilization, of life in society—thus implying, conversely, that human beings are "naturally" nasty, that their savage instincts are merely controlled or repressed by rules of good conduct. In accordance with this view, every occurrence of violence can be interpreted as a breakdown of the social contract, an abrasion of the thin veneer of civilization, a regression to primitive instincts, a reawakening of the tiger that sleeps in every one of us.

Now, no matter how one stretches and twists this view, it cannot be made to fit the massacre of the Jews that took place between 1939 and 1945. As is well known by now, the SS officers responsible for the smooth unfolding of operations were not particularly bestial or, for that matter, sadistic. (This is true of the overwhelming number of them, according to survivors.) They were normal human beings who, the rest of the time, played with their children, gardened, listened to music. They were, in short, civilized. In Germany between 1939 and 1945, moreover, there was no disruption of the social contract. In exterminating the Jews, these Germans were obeying either the laws of their society or the orders of their superiors. Only if they had disobeyed would the contract have been disturbed.

Thus, this first hypothesis, based on the postulate that "man is evil and society is good," based more or less on the postulate of Hobbes, clearly does not stand up to examination. We might start, then, from the opposite postulate, which is Rousseau's, that "man is good and society is evil." Faced with the suffering of others, human beings naturally feel compassion: if you see your neighbor's child falling into a well, you rush to help without thinking. But society—or at least some societies—place individuals in circumstances that neutralize and block their spontaneous compassion. It is in social circumstances that they become capable of performing the most atrocious acts without so much as perceiving their cruelty. There is nothing innate or primitive about this kind of evil; it is the result of a sustained, conscious effort. Barbarity, then, is a recent achievement of humanity, not its starting point. It is this second hypothesis that Bauman chooses to defend, after having criticized the first.

The question naturally arises: How does society (in the present case, Nazi society) go about neutralizing the moral sentiment proper to all human beings? Bauman's answer is, essentially, through modern bureaucracy. (He is a disciple of Raul Hillberg and Hannah Arendt.) The bureaucratic spirit transforms all events, Bauman maintains, and in several ways. First and foremost, no single actor in a bureaucracy follows an action through from conception to completion. The extermination of the Jews was a long chain of specific gestures of which no particular one was the extermination itself. One person looks after the train schedules, another sees to the supply of toxic substances, a third supervises the camp, a fourth oversees the redistribution of personal effects. Not one of them feels responsible—the one who supervises operations because he is carrying out orders issued from above, the one who organizes trains because he never sees a victim (and is also obeying orders), and so on.

Another aspect of bureaucracy, besides this fragmentation, also serves the

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ends of extermination. It is the depersonalization of the people involved. They are abstractions, general terms, numbers; the murderers are no longer face to face with their victims when they die. (This was one of the main reasons for inventing the gas chambers.) All these traits are also characteristic of modern warfare, in which both the division of labor and the distance from the target make killing a great deal easier, and eliminate all sense of direct responsibility.

In itself, such an analysis suggests an answer to the question of how to reduce the chances of such events recurring: by preventing the neutralization of moral sentiment, by reaffirming the social dimension of moral judgment. The battle for moral behavior must be waged on several fronts at once. First, the ethical domain (what the Ancients called natural right, what the Moderns call human rights) must be recognized as superior to laws, in order that we be able to declare a law unjust. Eichmann's behavior was legal, but it was immoral. In this sense, Auschwitz is an indictment of relativism, which declares that all moral values are contingent on particular traditions and forbid transcultural judgments.

Second, moral considerations must limit the power of science over society. Scientific thinking itself is, of course, worthy of respect; but dazzled by its prestige, we tend to demand that it tell us not only how things are, but how they ought to be. Such a demand is exorbitant. Knowledge does not, in itself, lead to the definition of good. Only moral considerations, individual and collective, can determine what is good—and therefore which scientific discoveries should be utilized and which should not.

Thus far I find Bauman's arguments convincing (though I would not speculate about whether human nature is good or evil). He goes on to extrapolate from them, however, to conclusions that seem to me indefensible. From the specifically modern character of bureaucracy and scientism (the submission of morality and politics to "Science"), Bauman concludes, after taking a few oratory precautions, that the Holocaust reveals the truth of modernity. Two traits of modernity come under particular attack: its cult of rationality and its Promethean spirit.

Modern reason is purely instrumental, claims Bauman, as was the behavior of the Nazis; and once the Promethean ambition to possess and to dominate nature has been formulated, there is no reason to stop before all Jews have been reduced to ashes. We can recognize in this argument a familiar philosophical refrain, which the Frankfurt School called "the dialectic of Enlightenment." But its most influential proponent was surely Heidegger, that traveling companion of the Nazi regime who declared that he could not see the difference between the mechanization of agriculture and the Auschwitz gas chambers: both were triumphs of technology, victories of instrumental rationality.

One would have thought that this theory is too disreputable to be aired yet again. But its influence surfaces in Bauman's book (and also in Kren and Rappoport's book). The only reason it retains its popularity, I believe, is that the notions on which it hinges are extremely vague and general. Is it really possible to believe, if we take the word "rationality" in its broad sense—if we take it to refer to a coherent system of beliefs that motivates action—that our modern society is the only one endowed with reason? Does not the self-accusation conceal a sort of reverse ethnocentricity? And if the word is taken in its narrow sense—to refer to logical rigor and a respect for argument in the search for truth—is there really no difference between the thought processes of Einstein and those of Himmler? What, indeed, proves the rationality of Auschwitz—its strict organization? But then Socrates must be a cat.

Things are even worse with the notion of modernity. Here again, two possible interpretations can be envisaged. Either modernity must be taken broadly, in which case it includes all contemporary political regimes—but of what use is a term that does not permit us to distinguish between democracy and totalitarianism? Once more, though he may not be aware of it, Bauman follows Heidegger, who saw no significant difference between the United States and the Soviet Union: same cult of technology and "subjectivity," same forgetfulness of Being and tradition. It happens, however, that the camps existed in the Soviet Union and Germany—that is, in two countries with totalitarian political structures—and not, in spite of everything, in the United States.

Bauman certainly cannot be accused of complacency with regard to the Soviet Union, but he remains virtually silent on this subject, managing the tour de force of discussing the camps with no reference to the regimes of the countries in which they flourished. Bauman himself points out, in his long commentary on Stanley Milgram's famous experiments on submission to authority, that the appearance of a conflict among those responsible for the experiment immediately put an end to the passively submissive behavior. For pluralism and the distribution of power prevent, or render improbable, the sort of behavior that led to the "Final Solution." And is not the presence or absence of pluralism one of the crucial differences between democracy and totalitarianism? Admittedly, scientism is a threat to both forms of society; but in democracy it encounters restraints that are absent in totalitarianism. And the Promethean spirit, the attempt to force things to be as they should be rather than accepting them as they are, leads to camps in totalitarian societies, but in democracies produces the welfare state.

Of course, modernity may be taken in a more specific sense, linked to the principles of equality, individual freedom, and open debate as the means of reaching decisions. In that case, however, Nazi Germany, far from being the supreme embodiment of modernity, was a highly singular mixture of modern and antimodern tendencies: blind obedience, for example, which was also present in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Prussia, is a characteristic not of modern egalitarianism, but of rigidly hierarchical regimes.

The fact that one confronts the terrify-

Paying

The little girl in the supermarket
takes my thumb by mistake,
her confidence a needle in my side.
Right height, right thumb, wrong
man with beard and glasses.
Still I'll stand until she lets go.

A single glance, a word,
and the day explodes.
I shall not be moved.

Muesli, orange juice, mayonnaise,
bread. The line steps
around us, checking out.
My bundle is too heavy,
my left leg itches, and while
only human, I know why the gods
squabble, immortalized in stone.

The little girl changes hands;
her arm must be tired. My thumb
sticks with the sweet remains
of candy she shouldn't have had.
I think she's a little girl
and I've never been
a father. I think I need
to stop collecting bruises:
I, me, my.

Alan Michael Parker

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ing story of the Holocaust, then, does not suffice to make all one's results correct. We bring our preconceived ideas to the confrontation, and these ideas shape our conclusions. And yet I remain convinced that, for all his failings, Bauman was right to undertake such a confrontation, and to recommend that we do the same. These overpowering narratives about humanity's debasement must be kept alive if we are to reach anything resembling lucidity about ourselves.

TZVETAN TODOROV is the author of *Literature and Its Theorists: A Personal View of Twentieth-Century Criticism* (Cornell University Press).

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Berlioz: A Musical Biography of the Creative Genius of the Romantic Era by D. Kern Holoman

(Harvard University Press, 736 pp., $30)

Berlioz's status as one of the supreme masters of European music is now assured. If it was not always so, this is attributable both to his uniqueness and, paradoxically, to his centrality. For Berlioz at once embodied and transcended his time. We can't quite square him with the development of German romanticism; yet there is a sense in which his aboriginal Frenchness represents a fundamental line, even the fundamental line, through the Teutonically oriented nineteenth century. "I took over where Beethoven left off," he once remarked, chiming with words uttered by Wagner in the early years of his career. It is Berlioz, indeed, who provides the link between Beethoven and the present day; as no less an authority than Busoni put it, "Berlioz pointed the way to untold generations."

We can appreciate Berlioz's centrality when we consider him in relation to the idols of his youth, Gluck and Beethoven. He admired Gluck because, as an heir to French classical drama and to *tragédie lyrique*, Gluck nonetheless "dramatized with the orchestra." He crystallized theatrical situations in musical terms. And Berlioz revered Beethoven because he continued the work of incarnating drama in purely instrumental terms, remaking form organically. The aristocratic opera house was to be reborn in the democratic concert hall, where drama was delivered into the hands of the symphony orchestra. A nineteenth-century humanist, Berlioz believed that the purpose of music was not to titillate the senses, but to communicate feeling and to imply a morality. He followed classical precedents in wanting to be "expressive and truthful, without ceasing to be a musician." He came to mistrust Wagner, therefore, because he tended to "dethrone music and reduce it to expressive accents." (All those Tristanesque chromatics, Berlioz feared, might creep into his room and nibble the furniture.)

In his operas and in his dramatic symphonies (which follow Beethoven's Ninth in expanding instrumental form to embrace words and implicit action), Berlioz tempered romantic passion with self-knowledge, exuberant invention with meticulous precision: "One must do coolly the things that are most fiery." This memorable remark seems to have been true of Berlioz's conducting as well as his composition. Contemporary chroniclers agree that, despite his romantic physical presence, Berlioz the conductor achieved his apocalyptic effects with the minimum of gesture. "How well he understands Beethoven! What severity, what austerity of performance! What effects, with never a concession to tinsel-showiness or poor taste!" Cesar Cui wrote, in reference to Berlioz's internationally celebrated performances of the Ninth.

Whereas Wagner functioned through harmonic tension and orchestral luxuriance, Berlioz was a melodist for whom line conditioned every aspect of his art. He himself pointed this out against critics who had accused him (as often happens with composers of decisive originality) of melodic inadequacy. Berlioz patiently explained that while it was not for him to estimate the worth of his melodies, it was unfair to deny their existence.

Perhaps his detractors did not recognize his melodies precisely because their

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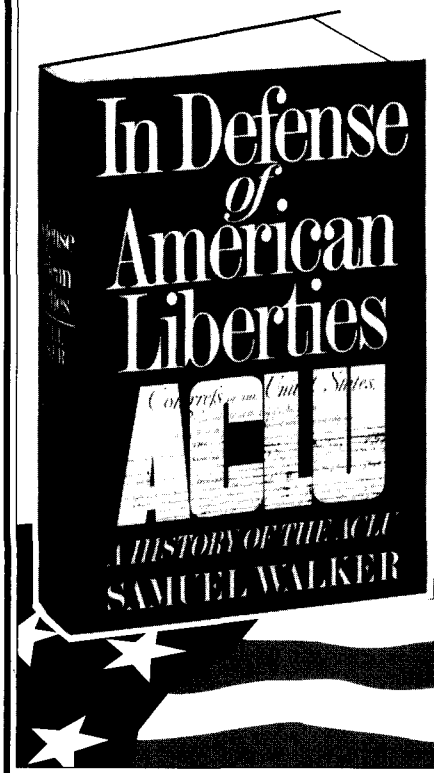

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length and their plasticity carried them far beyond the diatonic formulas of his day. Often Berlioz's writing is polymodal and linearly chromatic. Since the freedom of his rhythms and his harmonies is based on the nature of his themes, academically "correct" (that is, Teutonic) harmony would have been, for him, incorrect. He was a polyphonist who thought contrapuntally through the orchestra, rather than a homophonist who thought harmonically through a piano. The current craze for "authenticity" has revealed a great deal about the linearity of Berlioz's orchestration. One might even say that only since Roger Norrington's justly celebrated recording of the "Symphonie Fantastique" have we had an adequate notion of how Berlioz's no less celebrated orchestration should sound. It is not merely a matter of the textural clarity and the rhythmic precision made possible by gut strings and light-voiced French wind instruments. Norrington also restores some telling tone-colors (such as those of the ophicleides) that are obsolete; and oddly enough, obsolescence proves pristine, an act of renewal.

The basis of Berlioz's forms, again, is not tonal harmony, but melodic generation. He was one of the few musicians of his time who understood what Beethoven was after, structurally, in his late quartets. These technical features are somewhat explicable in light of the circumstances in which Berlioz worked. Conventional notions of romanticism are partial and even misleading, especially when applied to France; for while romanticism was indeed a bursting of the dikes, it entailed, too, a renewed respect for the past. As hero, the artist must destroy; but as artist, he must order and create. Siding with the people—the new meritocracy of his time—against bourgeois philistinism, Berlioz could compose music inciting revolutionary zeal; it was his ambition to conduct (with a drawn sword!) his "Symphonie Funébre et Trimphale," commissioned for a grandly ceremonial event, with an orchestra of 1,000 and a choir of 3,000 children in the Place de la Concorde. Yet this communal fervor was to operate in the interests of order and the aristocratic virtues.

For all its hyperromantic autobiographical program, the "Symphonie Fantastique" (1830)—Berlioz's first major work—is one of the most tautly and classically disciplined works in nineteenth-century music. And it is so because, rather than in spite, of the fact that its Witches' Sabbath frantically "deconstructs" classical values in a satanic parody of the idée fixe that stands generally for the artist's aspiration and more particularly for

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the English actress Harriet Smithson, idolized by theater-goers and (to distraction) by Berlioz. With him, the general was always latent in the particular, and vice versa. This is why he could reconcile deep religious feeling with intellectual skepticism. He found faith not in an inherited creed or ordained dogma, but in life itself, as it was manifest, for instance, in Shakespeare's prodigal vitality. The nineteenth century's reduction of spiritual experience to a rapping of tables could be dismissed with the contempt it deserved.

Berlioz was by far the most literately intellectual of the great composers: he holds an honored place in the history of French literature as a writer and a critic. He usually wrote his own libretti, often in distinguished verse or prose. Perhaps this is why he has been fortunate in his literary advocates. Several authoritative biographical tributes appeared in the decades following his death; the first major study was by Louise Pohl, published in 1900. Half a century ago W. J. Turner published a characteristically quixotic book that fanned the flames of Berlioz's genius at a time when re-illumination was welcome; forty years back Jacques Barzun produced his splendid two-volume work setting Berlioz in the social and aesthetic context of his time; and David Cairns's monumental critical biography (still in progress) stands supreme, with an elegance and a lucidity worthy of its subject. Now, hard on Cairns's heels comes a new and substantial "musical biography" by D. Kern Holoman. The scholarship is impeccable, the writing is civilized, the production is handsome.

BERLIOZ BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Since life and art are, with Berlioz, inextricably tangled, Holoman interlaces his chronological survey of the composer's tempestuous career with commentary on the music that the life occasioned. He does not attempt—even in a fat volume he hardly could—a detailed critical analysis of all the major pieces; but he pinpoints each work's essence, and comments usefully on Berlioz's revisions, emendations, and self-borrowings. Holoman highlights the evolution of Berlioz's art in "the musical practice of provincial France, the Parisian heritage of Gluck and others, and in Beethoven," stressing how radically different, in their theatrical and musical roots, "these circumstances were from those that molded his German contemporaries Mendelssohn and Schumann, and his friends Liszt and Chopin."

Berlioz was virtually self-taught, because he couldn't abide prescriptions, but Holoman shows how Jean François Lesueur (1760-1837)—Berlioz's professor at the conservatory, and a composer of operas and church music that displayed a partiality for modality and orientalism—helped him along his path. More significantly, he demonstrates how Berlioz's self-exploration as an artist was inseparable from the apparently fortuitous events in his private and public life. Thus the "Symphonie Fantastique" "came" to him, with Harriet Smithson and Shakespeare, "in my manhood, a voice out of the burning bush"; the personal revelation couldn't have happened, it seems, without the literary one. And public events and historical circumstance led to the creation of his supreme public work, the *Grande Messe des Morts* (1840). In the "Symphonie Fantastique," autobiography becomes a testament of (classicized) romanticism; in the *Messe des Morts*, external events provide a frame for intimate inner verities. An artist's personal story becomes a generalized myth, while the cult of the colossal, a consequence of the age's science and technology, reveals new potential for the human spirit. Holoman is astute in tracing technical parallels between Berlioz's most subtly personal pieces, such as the ravishing song "le Spectre de la Rose," and the far-ranging architecture of his monumental works.

In one respect, Berlioz's career, as recounted by Holoman, was a success story. Although he made enemies, as any potent personality must, he did not lack for recognition. The incandescent quality of his genius lit sparks everywhere, and honors were showered on him throughout Europe and Russia. Holoman shows that Berlioz's high intelligence fed his buoyancy, and therefore contributed to his fame. He organized his own monster concerts and mammoth tours, which brought him—notwithstanding his discomforting originality—accolades of praise and, on occasion, substantial material reward. He must have been difficult to resist, being in Judith Gautier's words "a man of original and striking appearance . . . small, lean with bony cheeks, a nose like an eagle's beak, a great forehead with piercing eyes, a ravaged, passionate look." Add to that musical genius, a brilliant mind, and an iron will, and one can understand why Berlioz carried all before him.

But success took its toll. His ravaged look ultimately testified to a ravaged spirit, and his glamorous life was hardly a happy one. It may be that his failures in personal life were necessary to his artistic fulfillment. Certainly the weird tale of his childhood passion for the starry Estelle Fornier, renewed when Berlioz was in his sixties and the little girl in her seventies, fuses pathos with grotesquerie in a manner that is familiar from his music. Similarly, his first significant and consummated love affair teetered between

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tragedy and farce. The beautiful young pianist Camille Moke was a minx who betrayed him, and Berlioz returned post-haste from vagabondage in Italy, armed with pistols and a vial of poison with which to exact revenge. (A Frenchman, he did not forget to pack the stomach pump.)

Despite the violent power of Berlioz's passion, the incident is—for us, if not for Camille and her lover—high comedy. There is an element of the bizarre, if not of the risible, even in the Harriet Smithson story, which begins in idolatry but ends in long lament. Harriet's theatrical career, at first luxurious, declined into sundry dissipations that undermined her health; she was a long time dying, and the once blissful lovers grumpily found all passion spent. Nor was there much personal satisfaction with Marie Recio, the mistress who consoled Berlioz during Harriet's long declension. She was an indifferent singer whom the musically demanding Berlioz came to find tiresome, though he waxed fulsome in grief—perhaps he felt guilty—when she, too, died. Even Berlioz's only son rewarded extravagant love inadequately: he was a "difficult" child, and not as bright as his brilliant father expected or needed; faute de mieux he went to sea and died of a foreign fever at the age of thirty-two. All these relationships brought Berlioz pain, and all triggered creative energies essential to him. It seems unlikely that his spark would have ignited so dazzlingly had he been "happier." Holoman recounts Berlioz's love stories without indulgence, as befits an artist who did coolly the things that are most fiery.

Berlioz's failures in his personal life were reflected in his relationship with the musical establishment. Although his initiative, his courage, and his intelligence triumphed all over Europe, the French establishment did what it could to gainsay his genius. Fundamentally, Berlioz was a composer of operas, yet the Paris Opera rejected his first masterpiece, *Benvenuto Cellini* (1834-37). They wouldn't like an opera about a heroic Outsider; and they were probably scared of the score's energy, fecundity, rhythmic alacrity, and vocal and orchestral virtuosity, which were all poles apart from the Parisian pap that the Opera promoted. When Berlioz tried to present *Cellini* in London, it was hissed off stage by a Paris-organized claque. The failure of *La Damnation de Faust* (1846) at the Opera added insult to injury, even though Berlioz ought to have recognized that so radical a compound of opera, oratorio, and symphony stood little chance in the hub of French conservatism.

Even so, Berlioz was wonderfully resilient. His creative powers were undimmed by misfortune; and he knew, as Beethoven did, that his works would ultimately triumph. Characteristically, he devoted the last phase of his creative life to his most monumental masterpiece, *Les Troyens* (1886-88), defiantly "amassing" himself, "as cats do before they make a desperate leap." That Virgil's *Aeneid* didn't have an easy passage into opera is not surprising, given its length and its complexity. Still, it was performed in Berlioz's lifetime, even if only the first of twenty performances was complete, the others having been whittled away by the management when the composer was too ill to protest. Finally the vindication of *Les Troyens*—a work so massive, so rich in invention, so vigorous in affirmation yet uncompromising in tragic awareness, so electrically charged in rhythm, so rapid (by nineteenth-century standards) in harmonic pacing—was spectacular. Although its vision of post-Napoleonic Europe isn't, couldn't have been, spelled out, it is audibly manifest in Berlioz's music, which reveals a Good Life more real than "reality."

Les Troyens wasn't quite Berlioz's last word; as an appendix to its grandly Greek-Roman tragedy he composed a comic opera, in French tradition with spoken dialogue as well as song, as his final homage to Shakespeare. *Béatrice et Bénédict* (1860-62) has a beautiful libretto into which Berlioz incorporated much of Shakespeare. Composed, as he put it, *con furia*, its comic vision of Mediterranean vivacity, pathos, and grace brings "a smile to the eyes and the lips." Together, these tragic and comic operas are Berlioz's hymn to a revivified aristocracy, or rather to a society in which the people have acquired spiritually aristocratic virtues.

In Berlioz's art, the vision still shines, a protest against the spiritual tawdriness of an age "seared with trade, bleared, smeared with toil," as Hopkins put it. But the vision was soon to be tarnished; for the people, for whom the vision was intended, proved incapable, not being artists, of dealing with the power and the glory. We can now see that the rule of the people came to mean not the rebirth of heroism, as Berlioz hoped, but a lack of thought, an absence of discipline, a want of skill—the very opposite of the artistic virtues. Perhaps Berlioz prophetically realized that the world that was supposed to symbolize the artist's apotheosis would instead destroy all that he held most dear. He ceased composing when he was sixty; and gave up the ghost when he was sixty-six.

Still, if Berlioz was disillusioned in his ideals, there is room for discrimination about the meaning of failure and success. Wagner became a part of Europe's history; because his music happened, we will never be the same again. We will return to him because we are all preoccupied with our variously significant and insignificant selves, and are wedded to love and to death. But it may be that Berlioz—a romantic rooted in French classicism, who anticipated our fumbling attempts to rescue civilization from chaos—expresses the nineteenth century more comprehensively and more deeply. To him we will return because we are fascinated by the diversity of human nature, and by the imagined prospect of a world in which we might more nobly and more humanely exist. Wagner's fulfillment instills in us regret for the life that we have not the time or the talent to live, but Berlioz's disillusion fills us with hope for the unborn lives that make our passions seem petty. The woof of hope and regret is the heart of our being. Berlioz and Wagner are opposites, but they are necessary opposites—for each other, and for us.

WILFRID MELLERS is professor emeritus of music at the University of York and is the author of, among other works, *Beethoven and the Voice of God* (Oxford University Press).

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In Praise of Dabblers

BY HENRY FAIRLIE

Whitehall
by Peter Hennessy

(Free Press, 851 pp., $35)

To expect Americans to be interested in 734 pages of text about the British civil service may seem as vain as hoping to persuade them that such English dishes as rissoles, bubble and squeak, shepherd's pie, and pink blancmange form the core of a piquant national cuisine. Yet the subject is absorbing, and Peter Hennessy's book is a tour de force of investigation, exposition, and good writing, based on many years of reporting for the more responsible British press.

Whitehall is a short, imposing street in London. In it and its immediate environs are situated the more august government departments. The "Whitehall" in the title of this book is the common designation for the whole British civil service, in particular for the higher administrative levels that are directly involved in the making of policy. There is, of course, no comparable permanent civil service in America. Here the departments of the government are more loosely associated, just as the secretaries in the Cabinet have less cohesion and a weaker sense of collective responsibility; and it is precisely the top policy-making positions in Washington that are usually filled with temporary political appointees, not career officers. Hennessy makes no attempt to contrast the two systems, but any American in the least interested in his own government will be stimulated to do so, and will find himself reflecting on the differences between the two cultures from which they have grown.

The span of history is different in the two countries. When viewed from St. James's Park, which bounds it on one side, Whitehall has, as Hennessy says, "a timeless and faintly romantic air." It is hard to forget that the origins of the British civil service can be clearly traced back to the clerics who served the great centralizing Norman, then Plantagenet and Tudor, monarchs. For good or ill, the sense of that history in a society as strongly traditional as Britain, custom building on custom, is reinforced by the fullness of the record: the files of the Public Record Office in London form the largest and longest unbroken national archive in the world.

Only in Britain could the Head of the Civil Service, Robert Armstrong, have said as recently as 1985, "I'm not sure that the underlying requirements of civil servants have changed really in 400 years," and looked for his professional code to Elizabeth I's injunction to her greatest servant, William Cecil, in 1558: "This judgement I have of you, that you will not be corrupted by any manner of gift and that you will be faithful to the State, and that without respect of my private will, you will give me that counsel that you think best." The guardians now of these "timeless verities" (Hennessy does not use the phrase approvingly) are the traditional civil servants in the highest posts of every department, numbering altogether, in the words of Solly Zuckerman, "no more than some 3,000 highly intelligent men and women who decided to make non-electoral politics their professional career."

How can one not be curious about these gifted figures, who could easily earn greater acclaim and financial rewards in many professions, but (as Armstrong has said) "feel much happier . . . in a kind of back room"? In the photographs that Hennessy provides, they are clearly (and only) men of great intelligence, force of character, perseverance, and self-assurance. Yet their faces do not reveal—perhaps they deliberately conceal—strong individual identities. They perfectly reflect the answer given by a temporary wartime civil servant when Edward Bridges, one of the most formidable of the regulars, asked him what he had learned from his experience in Whitehall: "I have learned, Sir Edward, to distinguish between the various shades of gray."

Despite his long pedigree, this traditional civil servant ("parfait, gentil," like Chaucer's knight) is really of quite recent growth, being the inspired creation of the reforms proposed in the Northcote-Trevelyan report in 1854, one of the great state papers that the Victorians seemed able to produce without curling

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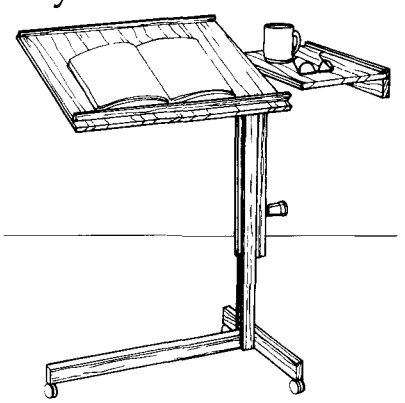

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a whisker. In the eighteenth century, recruitment to the civil service was by patronage; before that, it was by royal prerogative. The thrust of the Northcote-Trevelyan reforms, true to the mid-Victorian temper of the rising and overwhelmingly liberal middle class, was to open the civil service to merit by competitive examination.

But just as true to this temper, the recruitment was not to be democratic. The reforms clearly distinguished the Administrative Class, as it was henceforth to be called, from the merely "routine" or "mechanical" functions of the grades below it. Then, with a refinement that simply went unchallenged, they prescribed that the Class One (Administrative) examinations for the home, foreign, Indian, and colonial services, together constituting Whitehall, would predominantly be in classical studies. This was an Oxford emphasis in its school of *literae humaniores* or "Greats," not shared by the Redbrick universities or even really by Cambridge. Oxford, as Asa Briggs has pleasantly said, would meet the need for "a plentiful supply of informed gentlemen."

Once established, this new model civil servant quickly became embedded in the soil of a traditional society. It is one of the functions of tradition to make the new seem customary. But it has also meant that this beau ideal is almost impossible to uproot. This understandably infuriates today's critics of the civil service, such as the socialist economist Thomas Balogh, with his intemperate denunciations of this "Mandarins' paradise," an entrenched class of "non-specialist dabblers." Hennessy, too, is among the critics, but he does not deny that during the years of Britain's industrial, maritime, and imperial ascendancy, these informed gentlemen, for all their alleged "amateurism," earned their almost legendary reputation as the most professional civil service in the world.

In the Foreign Office, their diplomacy (rather than arms) protected Britain's interests as a world power, partly by intelligently and insistently delimiting them. From the India Office, Burma Office, and Colonial Office, all now defunct, they administered a vast, far-flung empire. At home, in the Treasury and other departments, they upheld a civil society and constitutional government, even during the rapid economic, social, and political transformations that elsewhere led to convulsive upheavals. Some dabblers!

They were snared and molded early, beginning in the "public" schools that were another mid-Victorian, middle-class invention. These schools were designed to prevent their sons from becoming Matthew Arnold's "barbarians." In conscious imitation of the education prescribed by Plato for the guardians of the state, the parents of the governing classes in England agreed that their sons should be torn from them at the age of eight; immured in boarding schools until they were eighteen, secure from the softening influences of the opposite sex; allowed a brief period of relative freedom at the university; and then banished to the corners of the empire, or immured again, this time in Whitehall, covenanted to a lifetime of disinterested, incorruptible, and unsung service.

To what end? In 1941 Bridges asked a historian (Oxford, of course) to supervise the preparation of a series of official histories of the Second World War before victory was even in sight. When the historian asked if there was any "use or point" in such an exercise at such a time, Bridges answered that he must "think in long term of the continuity of the State." The state! The concept, the word itself, is virtually absent from the political vocabulary of America. Although the immediate task of the Whitehall civil servant is to advise, to assist, and to protect his minister, he is insistent that he is the servant of the Crown, the personification of the continuity of the state beyond the ephemeral passages of politics.

Again, the role is alien to American political culture, which includes a bifurcated president, who is at once the head of state and the head of a partisan administration. The consequences of the difference are crucial. Serving the Crown through the "minister of the Crown" (of whatever party) temporarily set over him, the civil servant feels scant responsibility or loyalty to the prime minister. By contrast, not only Oliver North (who at least was in the White House) but Elliott Abrams (in the State Department) pleaded in their Iran-contra testimony that they were carrying out the policies of the president as leader of a party administration with his own program. Abrams's cunning ambiguity—it was never clear whether he saw himself as the agent of the president or the secretary of state—could not, at least until recently, occur in Whitehall.

One must resist the strong temptation to compare the Administrative Class of Whitehall with the eunuch rule of the ancient empires. Still, the selection and the nurture of the civil servants does foster an esprit de corps strong enough to invite the criticism that they are a caste. There is a bond, as Bridges said, "of having entered by the same gate and of being of the same vintage, or perhaps a year more or less in the bottle than Smith in the department across the road." The image of port brings back sharply the aroma that seemed seeped even into the wood paneling of the place when, as a political journalist, I penetrated the corridors of the Foreign Office, Treasury, or Home Office, the departments with the strongest identities, past usually closed doors, to the minister's private office.

Hennessy's volume is a plum pudding of stories, quotations, and pen portraits of these mandarins, cardinals, éminences grises, even philosopher kings, as they have been variously called. Cumulatively, they are a collective portrait; each throws light on the others. Bridges, who at one time held simultaneously the three highest posts in Whitehall (permanent secretary to the Treasury, Head of the Civil Service, and Cabinet secretary), was the son of the poet laureate Robert Bridges. The Economic Section of the Cabinet Office once contrasted him with a near contemporary who in time gathered almost as many of the reins of influence: "Bridges is the best of the poetry of the Civil Service, [Norman] Brook the best of the prose." Apt on both counts, the remark also carries just the right accent of cultivated gentlemen in easy converse in their clubs about their profession and colleagues.

An old Treasury messenger once watched Bridges disappear down a long corridor and observed, "Disgraceful, Sir Edward has holes in his socks!" In contrast, Brook was fastidious about dress. Maurice Bowra recalled him as an undergraduate at Oxford (Brook was, unusually, a grammar school boy): "Learned the tricks, learned the tricks. Came up with a front pocket stuffed full of pens. Soon disappeared inside. Learned the tricks." Brook's private office "would not dare to wear tweeds to work unless Sir Norman was on leave. One of his deputies, Sir George Mallaby, was warned not to attend Cabinet meetings in such a condition."

Bridges's "preferred method of running the Civil Service was a discreet chat over tea and buns." (Someone who was being particularly difficult was given cake.) Brook's characteristic method was to write a manual for the secretaries of Cabinet committees, "very concerned that form should be clear and workmanlike without embellishment," said a later Head of the Civil Service, William Armstrong. But both were men of immense authority. Bridges dominated the machine during both the war and the difficult years after the war, when the civil service had to put into effect the legislation enacting the Labour government's

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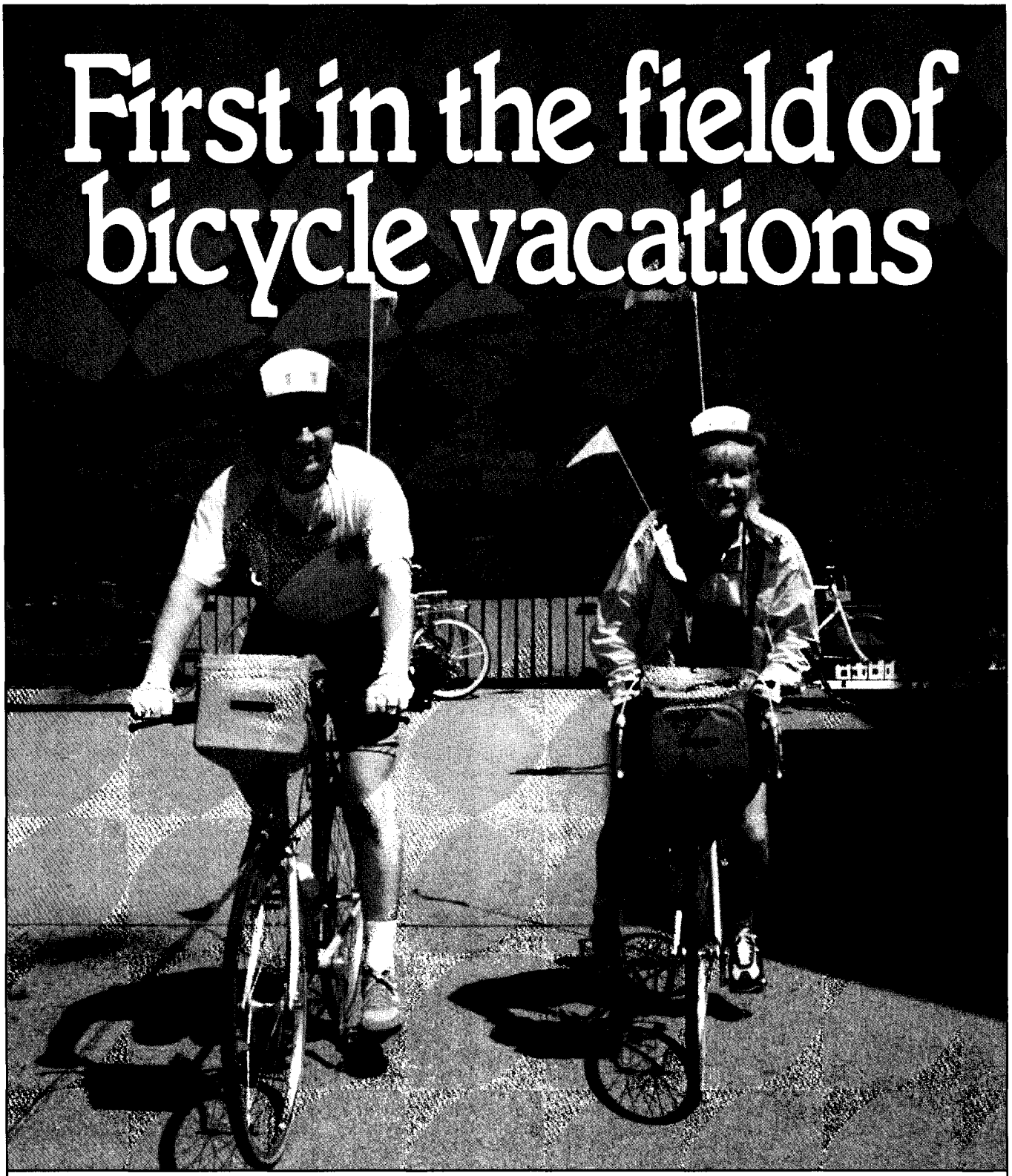

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welfare programs and experiments in nationalization.

Bridges had an uneasy time with Churchill. For one thing, Churchill liked advice to be reduced to one page of typescript. He told the son of the poet laureate of his minutes (i.e., memoranda): "To all intents and purposes . . . I was running a magazine." But Churchill valued his judgment and advice. When R. A. Butler became Chancellor of the Exchequer, Bridges told him of "blood draining" from the economy, and the possibility of a "collapse greater than had been foretold in 1931." Bridges, of course, was correct. When Anthony Eden was at the Foreign Office, he once flared, "I am not going to be run by Bridges!" But he would have done well to heed Bridges's warning, several months before Suez, that such an operation would almost inevitably lead to a sterling crisis—which, in the event, was what forced Britain's withdrawal—and that if the adventure was pursued, there would be a world of difference between "a war in which we go it alone, or a war in which we have the Americans with us from the outset." Again Bridges was direly correct.

When the high civil servant only reflects the views of the politicians he serves, the result, by contrast, can be disastrous. This happened most notoriously when Horace Wilson, an arch-appeaser, became in effect Neville Chamberlain's *chef de Cabinet*, at first camouflaged behind a misleading civil service title, then raised in 1939 to be Head of the Civil Service, "the most loathed Civil servant in the land." He was far too intimate with Chamberlain, addressing notes to "Neville, dear . . ." When Churchill came to power a year later, he at once ejected him from Downing Street, and growled that if Wilson ever came there again, "I'll make him Governor of Greenland!"

Hennessy thinks that these traditional civil servants are, by and large, dodos in the harsh world of Britain's economic decline and faded imperial glories, but he devotes substantially more than the first and enthralling half of his work to them. He cannot withhold his admiration, and even affection. But as he hastens, in a more or less Thatcherite vein, to introduce the "experts" and the "specialists," businessmen, technocrats and academics, with whom he would displace them, he shrugs off the values that any nation, one would have thought, would (if it was so fortunate) prize in its civil servants. In a single chapter, "Secrecy, Neutrality, Probity," after a bow to the previous serviceableness to the civil service of each of these qualities, each is generally given short shrift. Perhaps it reflects a difference of generation, but I am shocked that Hennessy is prepared cavalierly to weaken the secrecy that is essential to the conduct of government; the neutrality that enables civil servants to serve ministers of any party in the interests of the continuity of the state; and the probity that has been the professional (even the inner) grounding of their incorruptibility, and that in the past has earned the British civil servants their reputation for "fair dealing."

The traditional civil servants are now criticized for being "congenital snag-hunters," in the words of a Labour minister, for pointing out the risks and the difficulties of a proposed course of action. They are berated, in the words of a Fabian report, for being "traditionally good at judicial and negotiating functions" (those various shades of gray!) and "traditionally bad at creative financial management and . . . new technological developments." But the last two should be, surely, the work of elected, accountable politicians, and of "the forces of creativity and innovation and enterprise" outside government. They are lambasted for believing, with Douglass Wass, an outstanding Treasury regular, that enthusiasm is out of place in a civil servant, coloring judgment and leading to unwise decisions. The most appropriate motto for a civil service would seem to be "*Surtout pas de zèle.*"

But the main target of recent criticism is the "amateurism" of the informed gentlemen. It is perhaps too simple for the critics to consider that the informed gentlemen are, by education and by molding, *professional* amateurs or generalists. The truth is, the outside specialists in whom Hennessy puts his faith, along with Margaret Thatcher and her most lauded (and lorded) agent, Derek Rayner, brought in from Marks & Spencer, are the real amateurs in government; and with few exceptions they do not have the intelligence to be, so to speak, professional ones.

The fundamental flaw of Hennessy's thesis is that, like the rest of the critics, he sees the civil service as only a machinery of government, even as a bureaucracy in the Weberian sense, whereas the true concern of the Whitehall civil servant has been, and should be, statecraft. For most of history, as Hennessy points out, the statesman and the civil servant have been indistinguishable. The *imponderabilia* of politics, of which Bismarck used to talk, must be the main preoccupation of statecraft. And so it would seem obvious that the generalist is much more likely to have a feel for the imponderables than the specialist used to working in a narrow field with dogmatically defined problems.

Hennessy gives an enthusiastic description of the cooperation during the Second World War between the regulars in Whitehall and those brought in from outside as wartime civil servants. It was indeed impressive, initiated and organized, one may point out, by the regu-

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lars, who by 1939 had compiled a massive catalog of those who should be recruited. In the few days before the war, several leading academics must have been surprised to receive telegrams telling them to report, say, to the Ministry of Supply, which had to be expanded rapidly to mobilize Britain's industrial capacity.

In war, of course, there is one overriding goal—victory—which is accepted by the entire population. In pursuit of that goal, civilians acquiesced in the complete control of the economy by the state, the appropriation of all essential resources, the requisitioning of factories, the regulation of labor, the strict rationing of food, clothing, and gas, and the virtual dictation of every facet of civilian life. But when peace came, the united nation at once splintered. The common goal vanished. Owners asked for their factories back, labor wanted its freedom, including the right to strike, which it promptly did, in a crippling national dock strike; the people as a whole demanded the right to control their own lives; regulations became irksome. The auxiliaries, their specialties so useful when the goal was single, and when they could be equipped with the regulation they needed, got out fast. The civil service returned to moving among the *imponderabilia* of governing a free (and, to specialists, feckless) people.

Parliamentary and public opinion (even when they are perverse) are one of the main concerns of the regular civil service. A brief prepared by the Treasury for Bridges for his appearance before a Royal Commission on the civil service, "Points in favor of the Administrator, as contrasted with the Specialist," argued that the administrator takes the "main impact of Ministerial, Parliamentary and [Public Accounts Committee] requirements. 'Cushions' and 'carries the can for' the specialists." Scoffing at the "smugness, narrowness, arrogance" of the brief as a whole, Hennessy passes over this point. The traditional civil servant is insistent that under the constitution he finds the nation he serves in Parliament; and it is precisely Parliament that Hennessy and other critics wish out of the way, as the outside academics and businessmen have always done.

So at last, in two chapters of 100 pages, Hennessy brings us to the Thatcherite assault on the civil service, and to "Raynerism." But where his book should come most alive, if he really believes in the "can-do" outsiders, it loses its energy and its spark. The American reader especially will find only a pale, ignorant aping of his own government's system of "in-and-outers." Thatcher blatantly copies the American system by politicizing the higher civil service. Appointments and promotions have become more personalized in No. 10, so that civil servants in the departments are more inclined than before to consult the prime minister's wishes. In fact, she is introducing an American system of political appointees. As Ian Bancroft, recently Head of the Civil Service, has said, Thatcher has attained "a degree of personal ascendancy . . . over her colleagues which is unusual. . . . But I think that the idea that Permanent Secretaries . . . are being appointed because they're of the same political persuasion as the present government . . . is wholly misplaced."

The fact is that Hennessy, like the other critics, the outsiders, and Thatcher, thinks that there is now a single overriding goal, as there was in war. He went up to Cambridge in 1966, and makes much of the fact that he belongs to a post-Second World War, post-imperial, and especially post-Suez generation. Much more than my generation, which saw it all, he is dismayed by Britain's imperial and economic decline, of which the "peculiar strengths and weaknesses" of the civil service, he quotes a professor as saying, have formed "a powerful contributory cause." Decline is the theme behind his thesis. He is not happy with the post-war civil servants who accurately told their ministers that Britain was no longer

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a great power, when the politicians (at least until Suez) based their policies on the assured restoration of its previous status. Speaking publicly as Head of the Civil Service in 1973, William Armstrong even went so far as to say that the business of the civil service was "the orderly management of decline," which one must admit was indiscreet.

But what does one mean by "decline"? Is it not really a phase of transition, as in the European and Asian challenges to American supremacy today? If you see "decline" as the problem (and not as a transition calling for patient, if painful, adjustment), you will reach to single-minded solutions, as in war. You will even requisition the QE II as a troopship and send it off to the Falklands, carrying the prime of your Guards regiments and the Gurkha mercenaries, an operation of which the career officers in the Foreign Office were as skeptical as they were of Suez. Meanwhile other regulars wish to preserve the culture of their society, which is avowedly where Thatcher directs the brunt of her attack on Britain's civility.

It is grossly unfair to ask any commentator to be like Tocqueville. But one reason his work lives is that even before one reaches the cultural interests in the second volume, he places his descriptions of the American political system in the context of the national culture he observes. Hennessy makes no attempt to do this. His fascinating work has all the flaws of the insularity that mark so much of British life and writing today. This leads him into grievous error, as when he refers to the technically proficient elite of French civil servants, who since the war have been trained and disciplined to their monastic life in the Ecole Nationale d'Administration, only to disparage Whitehall. Even the French are not very happy with ENA's graduates, the *enarques*. The British would shrink from them, as they are likely in time to shrink from Thatcher's and Rayner's (and Hennessy's) "can-do" outsiders. The *grand corps* of the French civil service could no more be translated to Britain than the Napoleonic Code.

Hennessy has only one reference to the American system, an unilluminating quotation to the effect that the American attitude to government is different from the British. Even that is false: it is a different concept of the state. Each of the three truly great democracies, France, Britain, and America, has a different notion of the relationship of the individual to the state. Above all, the difference is in the different aspirations of the peoples: their attitudes to success (individual or national); the respective importance they attach to work and to leisure (Reginald Maulding once said to me after he ceased to be Chancellor of the Exchequer, "What can you do with a people who would rather enjoy themselves than be successful?"); their sense of what constitutes a community. These are some of the *imponderabilia* among which the traditional civil servant feels his way.

In Hennessy's presence, Denis Healey, the highly intelligent Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer, once jerked his thumb toward the senior Treasury officials in his room and said, "Any nation whose best and brightest go into 'number two' jobs like theirs rather than number one jobs like mine, is buggered." In much the same vein, Thatcher has said that the best minds should be "out making profits"; then she pulls them into the civil service, if they agree with her, to "reform" and run it as if it were Marks & Spencer or her father's grocery in Grantham. Well, there are those of us who are grateful that enough of these dabblers give lifelong, selfless service to the state, learning from long experience, like Bridges, that "the Walls of Jericho do not nowadays fall flat even after seven circumambulations to the sound of the trumpet," determining to preserve through all the buffets of circumstance the manners of a hitherto civil and tolerant people in a system of untidy, cumbrous, and cherished representative government. •

CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 6*

1924 as the Radio Manufacturers Association, EIA represents the entire U.S. electronics industry on a product-by-product basis. Its 1,000-plus members make electronics products of all types from semiconductors to satellites to telephones to televisions. In fact, well over ninety percent of EIA members are American-owned companies.

Finally, contrary to what is stated in the article, EIA has never opposed government funding for HDTV.

WILLIAM G. LITTLE
Washington, D.C.

John B. Judis replies:

Japanese firms make up the largest TV-producing group in EIA's Advanced Television Committee. They use a "front-group strategy," meaning that they get an ostensibly American trade association to take positions that reflect their own special interest. In December 1988 EIA vice president Thomas Friel opposed all government HDTV funding. Then in February 1989, as I reported, EIA shifted to opposing aid to HDTV consortia restricted to American firms.

TRB *continued from page 4*

contras were not the sorts of people who blew up power stations, because "this would hurt the people of Nicaragua."

Impoverishing the people of Nicaragua was precisely the point of the contra war and the parallel policy of economic boycott and veto of international development loans. American thinking has been at its most Orwellian on this point, blaming the Sandinistas for wrecking the Nicaraguan economy while devoting our best efforts to doing precisely that ourselves. The Sandinistas might well have been able to wreck the economy on their own, but we didn't give them the chance. I opposed economic sanctions against Nicaragua on the Reaganite grounds that they hurt the people they were intended to help. But it must be conceded that the economic disaster was probably the victorious opposition's best election issue. Nevertheless, it was Orwellian once again for the United States, having done this, to be posturing as the exhorter and arbiter of fair elections in Nicaragua.

Of course the most important factor in explaining the unexpected collapse of communism in Nicaragua is the unexpected collapse of communism in the Soviet Union. To what extent American policies of the past decade (as opposed to the broader bipartisan American policies of the past two generations) are responsible for this pleasant surprise is a larger question.

One way to think about these things, though, is to ask what the "Reagan-did-it" crowd would be saying today if the opposite had happened. What if the Soviet Union were as unreconstructed and malevolent as ever? Would they be saying, "Well, I guess Reagan's policies were a mistake"? Or would that also, in their view, have proved the wisdom of the arms buildup, Star Wars, and so on? If Daniel Ortega by now had declared himself emperor and launched a full-scale invasion of El Salvador, would contra supporters be taking credit for that outcome? Or would "responsibility" be back on the backs of contra opponents? The question answers itself.

All eyes are now on Cuba. Here is the "what if" question in the flesh. Just about the only hard-core Stalinist country left in the world is the one to which American opposition has been most implacable. Even when American leaders were hugging and toasting Brezhnev, they were isolating and reviling Castro. Would hard-liners like "responsibility" for the success of this policy? Or will they wait until the winds of change in the Soviet world have blown down this last domino before taking credit?

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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PARIS DIARIST

Ethnical dilemmas

THIS WAS TO BE THE SPRINGtime of nations, a thrilling season. But then some of the long-suppressed nationalities in the Soviet Union resolved that it was their time as well. And suddenly men and women of goodwill in the West stopped cheering. What would it do to poor Mikhail Gorbachev if—besides his economic tribulations and in addition to the yearnings for independence of the three small and obviously wronged peoples on the Baltic—also the Tajiks, the Uzbeks, the Armenians, the Moldavians, the Azeris, the Georgians, the Kirghiz, and, worst of all, the two Slavic nations, the Byelorussians and the Ukrainians with 50 million compatriots, decided to go their own ways and leave the Russians to themselves? Local elections have now begun, and they are something of a test of ethnic separatist sentiment. But a very imperfect test, since democratization is more a hope than a reality in most places. Still, isn't it odd that self-determination should be so begrudged these historic peoples while it seems almost axiomatic among these same men and women for the Palestinians—who, until deep into their encounter with Zionism, didn't even imagine they had a political identity or think, for that matter, that they were different at all from their neighboring Arabs? It's not that the people under the heel of the Red Army pose any security threat to the Russians of the sort that the Palestinians, with or without assistance from the Arab states, surely pose to the Israelis. One reason for this double standard may be that these Soviet nationalities will reveal some very ugly streaks: displace the rock of communism, and you're bound to find a few nasty snakes. Conor Cruise O'Brien calls this the horrors of glasnost. But then Palestinian nationalism isn't exactly a pretty spectacle either. Maybe it's just nostalgia for the reassuring stability of the cold war that explains our hesitance about cheering when Moscow's colonies rebel. Or perhaps it's solidarity with someone we perceive as a besieged leader, much as, say, the French and the Chinese felt for Richard Nixon during Watergate.

COMRADE GORBACHEV SEEMS obsessed with the inviolability of postwar frontiers that may be brought into question by the reunification of Germany: "Any encroachments on the borders of other states must be ruled out." This is his way of telling the Poles, a chunk of whose present territory belonged to Germany prior to the Second World War, that the Soviets will secure their territorial gains to the west. But it's also a way of discouraging any thought that the Soviet Union could be expected to disgorge land it gobbled up after the war as well. Some of this land, however, was actually part of Poland prior to 1939. So Gorbachev is really protecting Russia against potential Polish claims more than he is protecting Poland against potential German claims. But it all may be in vain: these present Soviet territories were Byelorussian and Ukrainian before they were Polish, and the Byelorussians and Ukrainians have not yet had their say. Even history, it turns out, provides no certain guidelines for justice. Gorbachev thinks it does. He has written that changes in the politics of Europe should not "spell a threat to or harm the national interests of neighbors, or anyone else, for that matter." This is to say that to victors belong the spoils of wars they didn't start. The dictum could easily and reasonably be applied to the territories left in Israel's hands after the Six-Day War. But I won't belabor the obvious.

ANOTHER COUNTRY THAT ISN'T enjoying the springtime of nations is Lebanon, and that's because it is a nation in name only. The recent fratricide among the Maronites should, however, alter our facile images of Lebanon. It's hardly that the nearly 700 killed and 3,000 injured in a few days by two warring armies from the same armed camp constitute especially high numbers, certainly not in the context of this bloodied country's recent history. But we'd been accustomed to seeing the strife in Lebanon as interreligious, primarily between Muslims and Christians. We had also noticed that Muslims fought other Muslims, but that could have been because they were Sunnis at war with Shiites, or Shiites at war with Druze. This still fits the denominational paradigm, or the ethnic one. There were also the ongoing episodic battles of the Palestinians with all the sects and sectlets native to Lebanon. But the Palestinians are foreigners. So, in a way, these killings needn't be explained or explained away. We don't yet understand why Shiite militias war on one another. But we have the ex cathedra characterization of Shiites as Muslim fundamentalists. This substitutes for an explanation: from fundamentalists we expect nothing ... or we expect anything, which amounts to the same thing. In the meantime the Christians of East Beirut and Mont Liban were seen as the carriers of civilization among the barbarians—at least that's how the French saw them, and, if truth be told, so did many Israelis. Pope Leo X called the Maronites "a rose among the thorns," and they believed it for centuries and believe it still. It was all nonsense, of course, and now these same Christians have given the lie to this myth themselves. There is no rational explanation for why General Aoun and "Doctor" Geagea (with their usual care for details, some in the American press call him "doctor," although he never finished medical school) have been raining death on their own people except that these are two different men in command of two different armed gangs. They fight simply because they live. And the culture from which they come scarcely thinks this odd. Their men fight on and on, and the women and children bleed.

THE PEOPLE OF KASHMIR AND Jammu won't have their shot at self-determination anytime soon. Moreover, since Hindu India is their oppressor they'll not get much sympathy from the West either. It's as if saintly old Gandhi still lives. Muslims actually fare much better in the ratings when they're struggling against the Jews. But the situation in Kashmir is, nonetheless, pretty cut and dried. Some forty years ago Kashmir was promised a plebiscite in which it could affirm or renounce its absorption into the Indian state. Although haughty India has been big on self-determination for others, it has never permitted the Kashmiri vote to take place. For obvious reasons: the mostly Muslim Kashmiris do not think of themselves as Indians; they think of themselves as Kashmiris or as Pakistanis. This is why India and Pakistan have fought three wars already. We may be poised now for the fourth. Two-thirds of the Kashmir's capital's population turned out late in February for the largest anti-Indian demonstration since 1947. In barely a month of violent strife Indian security forces had killed at least 100 Kashmiris. Now their kin and the kin of their kin call for a holy war.

MARTIN PERETZ

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